The First Life of Saint Francis

by Brother Thomas of Celano

Preface

Chapter 1

In the Name of the Lord, Amen. Here begins the Preface to the Life of Blessed Francis

Desiring to relate in order, with pious devotion and under the constant guidance and teaching of truth, the acts and life of our most blessed father Francis, it has been my endeavour, at the bidding of the lord and glorious Pope Gregory, to set forth to the best of my ability (though with unskilled words) at least those things that I have heard from blessed Francis' own mouth or have understood from faithful and approved witnesses, since the memory of none can retain all that he did and taught. But would that I might deserve to be the disciple of him who always avoided dark sayings and knew no pomp of words!

I have divided the whole of what I have been able to gather concerning that blessed man into three parts, arranging everything in single chapters, so that differences in time might not confuse the order of events and bring the truth into doubt. The first part accordingly keeps to the historical order and is principally devoted to the purity of his blessed conversation and life, to his holy character, and his wholesome teaching. In this part are also inserted a few out of the many miracles which the Lord our God deigned to work by him, while he was living in the flesh.

The second part relates the events from the last year but one of his life until his happy death. The third contains many, and omits more, of the miracles which the glorious Saint, reigning with Christ in the heavens is working on earth. It also recounts the reverence, honour, praise and glory which the happy Pope Gregory, and with him all the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, most devoutly paid to him by enrolling him in the number of the Saints. Thanks be to Almighty God, Who ever in His Saints shows Himself worthy of admiration and love!

To the Praise and Glory of Almighty God. The Father, Son and

Holy Ghost, Amen. Here begins the Life of our most Blessed Father Francis.

Part I - Here Begins the Life of Our Most Blessed Father Francis

Chapter 1

How he bore himself in the worldly habit and mind

1. There was in the city of Assisi, which stands on the borders of the valley of Spoleto, a man named Francis, who from his earliest years was brought up by his parents frowardly, according to the vanity of the world; and, by long imitation of their wretched life and conduct he became himself still more vain and froward. For this wicked custom has so taken root everywhere among those who bear the Christian name, and this pernicious doctrine is everywhere so settled and established as though by public law, that men purposely bring up their children even from the cradle with excessive carelessness and laxity. For at first, when they are beginning to speak or rather to lisp, little children only just born are taught by signs and sounds certain very shameful and detestable things, and when they are weaned they are forced not only to say but even to do actions full of lust and wantonness. Being compelled by the fear which is natural to their age, not one of them dares to behave virtuously, for this subjects them to harsh punishments. Well, therefore, says a secular poet: "Because we have grown up amid our parents' practices, therefore [even] from childhood all evils pursue us". This witness is true: for the more fully the parents' wishes have been realised, the more harmful is it for their children. But after all, when the children are a little older they always fall into worse conduct still, of their own impulse. For a corrupt tree grows from a corrupt root, and what has once been thoroughly depraved can scarce be brought back to the rule of uprightness. But when they have begun to enter the gates of youth what manner of persons think you that they become? Then indeed, plunging into every kind of debauchery (since they are free to fulfil all their pleasure) they give themselves over with all their might to the service of wickedness. For, having thus become by voluntary servitude the slaves of sin, they yield all their members as instruments for iniquity, and, showing forth nothing of the Christian religion in

their life and conduct, shelter themselves under the mere name of Christianity. (2) These wretches often pretend that they have done things more wicked than they really have, lest they should seem more contemptible in proportion to their innocence.

Such are the miserable rudiments wherewith that man, whom today we revere as a saint because he truly is a saint, was familiar from boyhood; and almost until the twenty-fifth year of his age he miserably squandered and wasted his time. Nay, surpassing all his coevals in his bad progress in vanity, he proved in more abundant measure an instigator of evil deeds and a zealot in folly. He was the admiration of all; and in pomp of vainglory he strove to surpass the rest in frolics, freaks, sallies of wit and idle talk, songs, and soft and flowing attire, for he was very rich. He was not miserly but prodigal, not a hoarder of money but a squanderer of his substance, a shrewd trader but a most ostentatious spender; a man, however, very kindly in his dealings, very easy and affable, though this became foolishness to him, for his attractive disposition was the chief cause that many went after him who were promoters of evil-doing and inciters to crime. And so, compassed about with the troops of the wicked, haughty and uplifted he strutted along amid the open places of Babylon until the Lord looked down from heaven and for His name's sake removed His fury far from him, and curbed his tongue with His praise, that he might not perish utterly. Therefore the hand of the Lord came upon him, and the change wrought by the right hand of the Highest, that through him assurance of restoration to grace might be given to sinners, and that he might become to all a pattern of conversion to God.

Chapter 2

How God visited his heart by sickness of body and a vision in the night

3. For in truth while this man in youthful heat was still fervent in sin, while the age of wantonness was urging him forwardly to fulfil the demands of youth, and while, not knowing how to restrain himself, he was stirred by the venom of the Old Serpent, suddenly the vengeance, or rather the unction of God came upon him and strove first to recall his erring senses by the infliction of distress of mind and discomfort of body according to the Prophet's word,

"Behold I will hedge thy way with thorns and will compass it with a wall". (Hosea 2:6) And so, worn by long sickness (as man's stubbornness deserves, which can scarce be amended but by chastisements), he began to muse on other than his wonted thoughts. And when now he was somewhat restored, after he had begun to walk about the house in order to recover his strength, leaning on a stick, one day he went abroad and began to look curiously on the landscape around. But neither the beauty of the fields, the pleasantness of the vineyards, nor anything that is fair to see could in anywise delight him. Wherefore he wondered at the sudden change in himself and began to deem the lovers of such things to be very fools; and from that day he began to despise himself and in some sort to hold in contempt what he had admired and loved before; (4) but not thoroughly nor truly, for he had not yet been loosed from the bonds of vanity nor had he shaken off from his neck the yoke of perverse slavery. For it is very hard to forsake accustomed things, nor is it easy to sap the force of what has once been put into the mind. The mind which has been long secluded goes back to what it has first been taught, and vice by assiduity commonly becomes nature. Accordingly Francis as yet tried to fly from God's hand, and, heedless for a while of his Father's correction, turned his mind, amid the smiles of prosperity, to worldly things; and, ignorant of God's plan, still looked forward to great exploits of worldly glory and vanity. For a certain noble of the city of Assisi was making much ado with warlike preparations, and, puffed up by a gust of vainglory, vowed that he would go to Apulia, to make increased gain of money or honour. On hearing this, Francis, who was heady and not a little adventurous, agreed to go with this noble; being his inferior in birth, but his superior in mettle; poorer in pelf, but more lavish in largess.

5. One night therefore, after Francis had wholly determined to carry out this enterprise, and burning with desire was most eagerly longing to start on the journey, He who had smitten him with the rod of justice visited him in the sweetness of grace by a night vision, and since he coveted glory, drew him on and uplifted him by [showing him] the height of glory. For it seemed to him that he had his house full of warlike weapons, to wit, saddles, shields, lances and other accoutrements; and, greatly rejoicing he wondered in himself what this might be: for he had not been wont to see such

things in his house, but rather, bales of cloth to sell. And, as he was not a little astonished at the sudden occurrence, he was told that all these arms were his and his knights'. On awaking, he rose early with gladsome heart, and taking the vision to be a presage of great prosperity, felt sure that his journey to Apulia would be prosperous. For he knew not what he said and had as yet no knowledge of the gift bestowed on him from heaven. Yet he might have seen that his interpretation of this vision was not true, because though the vision bore some resemblance to the facts, his mind was nevertheless not wont to rejoice over such things as these. For he had to do some violence to himself in order that he might accomplish his design and carry out the journey he longed to take.

And indeed mention of arms here at the beginning is very beautifully made, and arms are very fittingly delivered to the knight about to do battle against the strong man armed, that like a second David he may in the name of the Lord God of hosts deliver Israel from the standing reproach of the foe.

Chapter 3

How, changed in mind but not in body, he spake allegorically of a treasure found, and of a Bride

6. Being therefore changed (but in mind, not in body) he now refused to go to Apulia, and strove to turn his will to things divine. Accordingly he withdrew himself for awhile from the bustle and business of the world, and strove to lay up Jesus Christ in the inward man. Like a prudent merchant he concealed from the eyes of the deluded the pearl he had found, and endeavoured in secret to sell all he had and purchase it. There was a man in Assisi whom he loved above all the rest; and, since they were of the same age, and constant intercourse in mutual affection emboldened him to impart his secrets to this friend, he would often take him to places retired and suited for counsel, declaring that he had found a great and precious treasure. His friend rejoiced, and being eager about what he had heard, gladly accompanied Francis whenever he was invited. There was a cavern near the city to which they would often go, talking together about the treasure. The man of God (for he was already holy through his holy purpose) would go into the cavern,

while his comrade waited outside; and, filled by a new and single spirit, would pray to his Father in secret. He longed that none should know what he was doing within, and, wisely taking occasion by the good to conceal the better, consulted God alone in his holy purpose. He prayed devoutly that the eternal and true God would direct his way, and teach him to do His will. He endured the utmost travail of spirit, nor could he rest until he should fulfil in deed what he had conceived in his heart. Various thoughts succeeded one another, and grievously troubled him by their importunity. Within he glowed with the Divine fire, nor could he hide the blaze which filled his mind from outward view. It repented him that he had sinned so grievously and offended in the sight of [God's] Majesty; neither the past evils, nor the present delighted him; but he had not yet fully received assurance that he would refrain from evil in the future. Wherefore when he came back to his companion outside he was so worn out with travail that he seemed a different man from him who had gone in.

7. But one day when he had been most earnestly beseeching the Lord's mercy, the Lord showed him what he must do. And then he was filled with such joy that, unable to contain himself for gladness, even against his will he uttered somewhat of it to the ears of men. Yet, though for the greatness of the love wherewith he had been inspired he could not keep silence, he spoke in some sort warily and in riddles. For in the manner that he spoke to his special friend of a "hidden treasure" (as has been said) so also he strove to speak to others figuratively. He said that he would not go to Apulia but promised to do great and noble deeds in his native place. Men thought he wanted to marry a wife, and questioned him saying, "Francis, art thou going to take a wife?" But he would answer, "I will marry a nobler and fairer bride than you ever saw, who shall surpass all others in beauty and excel them in wisdom".

And verily the spotless Bride of God is the true Religion which he took unto him, and the "hidden treasure" is the Kingdom of Heaven, which he sought out with such great desire. For it was altogether necessary that the Gospel calling should be fulfilled in him who was to be a minister of the Gospel in faith and truth.

Chapter 4

How he sold all his goods and despised the money he got for them

8. Thus disposed, and strengthened by the Holy Ghost, the blessed servant of the Most High (for that the time appointed was come) followed that blessed impulse of his soul through which, by trampling on worldly things, the highest good is attained. He might no longer delay, for a deadly disease had now grown to such a height everywhere and had so laid hold on all the limbs of many, that, did the physician tarry but a little, it would choke the vital spirit and snatch away the life. He arose therefore, fortifying himself by the sign of the holy Cross; prepared his horse, mounted, and taking with him scarlet cloths to sell, came in haste to the city called Foligno. Here, having as usual sold all the goods he brought, the happy merchant left behind the horse he was riding, after receiving its price. So, having laid aside his burdens he turned back, and bethought him, with religious mind, what he should do with the money. Presently, being in wondrous fashion wholly turned to God's work, and feeling that to carry that money even for an hour would sorely oppress him, he hastened to get rid of it, deeming all the advantage of it to be as sand. And as he was returning toward Assisi, he found by the wayside a church which had been built of old in honour of Saint Damian, but was threatening soon to fall from excessive age. (9) When Christ's new knight came to it he was moved with compassion for such need, and went in with awe and reverence. Finding a poor priest there, he kissed his hands with great faith, offered him the money he was carrying, and set forth to him in order his purpose. The priest was amazed, and wondering at a change of circumstances incredibly sudden, refused to believe what he heard; and, thinking he was being hoaxed, he would not keep the offered money. For almost the day before (if I may say so) he had seen Francis living riotously among his kinsfolk and acquaintance and surpassing the others in folly. But Francis with obstinate persistence strove to gain credit for his words, praying and earnestly entreating the priest to let him stay with him for the Lord's sake. At last the priest agreed to this, but would not take the money for fear of Francis' parents; and the true despiser of money cast it on a window-sill, heeding it as little as dust. For he longed to possess wisdom which is better than gold, and to get prudence, which is more precious than silver.

Chapter 5

How his father persecuted and bound him

10. So while the servant of God Most High was dwelling in the aforesaid place his father went all round about like a diligent spy, wanting to know what was become of his son. And when he understood that his son was leading such a life in that place, being inwardly grieved at heart over the sudden turn of events, he was exceedingly enraged, and, having called his friends and neighbours together, flew to the place wherein the servant of God was dwelling. But he (for that he was a new athlete of Christ) on hearing of the threats of his persecutors and getting wind of their coming, desiring to give place to wrath, plunged into a hidden pit that himself had made ready for the purpose. The pit (known perchance to one only) was in the house, and here he lay hid for a month so continuously that he durst hardly come forth for human need. When food was given him he ate it in the secrecy of the pit, and every service was rendered to him by stealth. He prayed constantly amid showers of tears that the Lord would deliver him from the hands of those who were persecuting his soul, and that in kindly favour He would fulfil his pious wishes. In fasting and weeping he besought the Saviour's clemency, and, distrusting his own efforts, cast all his care on the Lord. And, though he was in darkness and in the pit yet he was filled with an ineffable gladness of which till then he had had no experience, and, wholly fired by this gladness, he left the pit and exposed himself openly to his persecutors' curses.

11. Forthwith therefore he arose, bold, eager and active; and, bearing before him, in order to fight for the Lord, the shield of faith, armed moreover with a great confidence, he took his way toward the city, and, kindled with Divine heat, began severely to accuse himself of sluggishness and cowardice. When they saw this, all who knew him, comparing what he had been with what he now was, began to revile him miserably; they cried out on him as distraught and demented, and pelted him with mire and stones. They saw that he was changed from his former ways and greatly worn by maceration of the flesh, and therefore they set down all he did to his privations and to madness. But (for that the patient man is

better than the arrogant) the servant of God turned a deaf ear to all these things, and, unbroken and unchanged by any injuries, gave thanks for all to the Lord. For in vain does the unrighteous persecute one who is making for virtue, since the more he is buffeted the more mightily will he triumph. Indignity (as some one says) strengthens a generous spirit.

12. Now when such noise and rumour about him had been some time current in the open places and streets of the city, and the sound of those who mocked him was re-echoing hither and thither, the report of these things at length reached his father, among many others to whose ears it came. And when he heard his son's name, and that his fellow-citizens were treating him thus, he arose forthwith, not to deliver his son but rather to ruin him, and, casting all moderation aside, he rushed on him like a wolf on a sheep, and, looking at him with malign and cruel countenance, laid hands on him very shamelessly and disgracefully, and carried him off to his own house. And so, without any mercy, he shut him up for several days in a dark place, and thinking to bend his son's spirit to his own will, urged him at first by words, and then by stripes and chains. But this made Francis the readier and stronger to carry out his holy purpose, nor, though insulted by words and wearied by chains, did he flinch from endurance. For he who is bidden to rejoice in tribulation, though he be scourged and bound, can neither decline from his right intent and posture of mind, nor be led away from Christ's flock: nor does he quake in the overflowing of many waters whose refuge in distress is the Son of God, Who, in order that we might not think our troubles hard, ever showed that those He endured were greater.

Chapter 6

How his mother released him, and how he stript himself before the Bishop of Assisi

13. When his father had departed for awhile from his home on business, the man of God remained bound and in confinement in the house; but his mother, who had been left alone at home with him, disapproved of what her husband had done, and spoke to her son kindly. And though she saw that she could not recall him from

his purpose, she yearned over him with maternal compassion, and she loosed his chains and let him go free. But he, giving thanks to Almighty God, returned to the place where he had been aroused before. 1 But now he gave himself greater freedom, having been proved in the school of temptation; and the manifold struggles he had gone through had given him a more cheerful countenance. The wrongs that had been done him had endued him with a more confident temper, and, with higher spirit than before, he went about freely everywhere. Meantime his father came back, and, not finding his son, heaped sin on sin and turned round to upbraid his wife. Then, raging and blustering, he ran to the place where his son was, so that, if he could not call him back, he might at least drive him out of the province. But (for that the fear of the Lord is confidence of strength) when the son of Grace heard his carnal father coming to him, he went of his own accord to meet him fearless and joyful, crying with free speech that he cared nothing for his father's chains and stripes. He averred moreover that he would gladly undergo any evils for the name of Christ.

14. But when his father saw that he would not be able to recall Francis from the journey he had begun he was roused by all means to get back the money. The man of God had desired to offer it all to be spent on feeding the poor and on the repair of that church. But he, who loved not money, was not to be misled by any show of good that it might bring, and he who was not held back by any affection for it was in nowise disturbed at the loss of it. Therefore when the money was found which that greatest despiser of earthly things and that most eager searcher after heavenly riches had thrown aside into the dust of the window, the raging father's fury was somewhat appeased, and the thirst of his avarice in some sort allayed by the dew of discovery. Then he brought his son before the bishop of the city, so that by a formal renunciation of all his property in the bishop's presence he might give up all he had. And Francis not only did not refuse to do this, but, greatly rejoicing, made haste with ready mind to perform what had been demanded of him.

15. When brought before the bishop, Francis would brook no delay nor hesitation in anything: nay, without waiting to be spoken to and without speaking he immediately put off and cast aside all his

garments and gave them back to his father. Moreover he did not even keep his drawers but stripped himself stark naked before all the bystanders. But the bishop, observing his disposition, and greatly wondering at his fervour and stedfastness, arose forthwith, gathered him into his arms and covered him with the mantle which he himself was wearing. He understood clearly that "the counsel was of God," and perceived that the actions of the man of God which he had witnessed enfolded a mystery. Immediately therefore the bishop became his helper, and, cherishing and encouraging him, he embraced him in the bowels of charity.

Behold even now he wrestles naked with his naked foe, and having cast off all that is of the world, is mindful of God's righteousness alone! Even now for that righteousness' sake laying aside all anxiety he strives so to set at naught his own life that as a poor man he may find peace in his harassed way, and that meanwhile the wall of the flesh alone may separate him from the vision of God.

Chapter 7

How he was taken by robbers and thrown into the snow; and how he served the lepers

16. He who formerly wore scarlet array was now going clad in scanty garments, and as he was singing praises to the Lord in French in a certain wood, some robbers suddenly rushed upon him. On their asking him in no friendly tone who he was, the man of God answered confidently with a loud voice: "I am a herald of the great King. What is that to you?" But they beat him and cast him into a pit filled with deep snow, saying, "Lie there, thou clownish herald of God!" But he turned himself this way and that to shake off the snow, and when they went away he jumped out of the pit, and exhilarated by great joy began with loud voice through the grove to utter praises to the Creator of all things. At length he reached a cloister of monks where he spent several days as a scullion, wearing nothing but a wretched shirt, and desiring to be filled at least with broth. But when, meeting with no pity there, he could not even get any old clothing, he left the place (not moved by anger but urged by need) and came to the city of Gubbio where he got him a small tunic from a former friend of his.

But some time afterwards when the fame of the man of God was spreading everywhere and his name was noised abroad among the people, the Prior of the aforesaid monastery remembered and realised how the man of God had been treated and came to him and for reverence of the Saviour humbly begged forgiveness for himself and his monks.

17. And then the holy lover of all humility betook him to the lepers, and was with them, serving them all most zealously for God's sake, washing all foulness from them and even wiping away the matter from the ulcers; even as he says himself in his Testament, "For when I was in sin it seemed to me exceeding bitter to look on lepers, but the Lord brought me among them, and I showed mercy unto them". For indeed at one time the sight of lepers was (as he used to say) so bitter to him that when in the days of his vanity he looked at their houses about two miles off, he stopped his nostrils with his hands.

But when now by the grace and power of the Highest he was beginning to think of holy and profitable things, one day, while still in the habit of the world, he met a leper, and, having become stronger than himself, went near and kissed him.

Thereafter also he began to despise himself more and more, until by the Redeemer's mercy he attained to perfect conquest of himself. While remaining in the world and still following the world he was a helper of other poor also, stretching forth the hand of mercy to the destitute and pitying the afflicted. For one day when (contrary to his wont, for he was most courteous), he had upbraided a poor man who asked alms of him, forthwith, led by penitence he began to say to himself that it was a great reproach and shame to deny the request of one asking in the name of so great a King. And then he settled it in his heart that he would, according to his power, never in future deny anything to any one asking him for the sake of God. Which thing he most diligently performed and fulfilled, until he gave himself wholly, and in every way [to others], having become a practiser before he became a teacher of that counsel of the Gospel: "Give to him that asketh of thee (it says) and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away".

Chapter 8

How he built Saint Damian's church: and concerning the conversation of the Ladies who abode in that same place

18. Now the first work which blessed Francis undertook after having been delivered from the hand of his carnal father was to build a house for God: but he did not try to build it anew, rather did he repair the old and restore the ancient; he pulled not up the foundation, but built upon it, ever (though unwittingly) respecting Christ's prerogative, for "other foundation can no one lay than that which hath been laid, which is Christ Jesus". And when he had returned to the place where (as has been said) a church of Saint Damian had been built of yore, he zealously repaired it in a short time, the grace of the Most High being with him. This is that blessed and holy place wherein the glorious Religion and most excellent Order of Poor Ladies and holy virgins took its happy beginning some six years after blessed Francis' conversion, by the means of this same blessed man: whereof the Lady Clara, a native of the city of Assisi, a stone precious and strong above all the others of the pile, was the foundation. For when, after the beginning of the Order of the Brethren, the said lady had been turned to God by the admonitions of the holy man, she lived for the advantage of many, and for a pattern to a countless multitude. She was noble by family, but nobler by Grace; a virgin in her flesh, most chaste in her mind; youthful in age, but hoary in spirit; stedfast in purpose and most ardent in longing after the Divine love; endued with wisdom and eminent in humility; bright (*clara*) in name; brighter in life; brightest in character. (19) And over her arose a noble fabric of most precious pearls, "whose praise is not of men but of God," since neither our narrow thought avails to imagine it, nor our scanty speech to utter it. For chiefly and above all things flourishes in them the virtue of mutual and continual charity which so binds their wills into one that though in any place forty or fifty of them be dwelling together, identity in willing and not willing makes in them one spirit out of many. Secondly, there glows in each one the jewel of humility which so preserves the good gifts bestowed on them from Heaven that they are worthy of the other virtues also. Thirdly, they are all so sprinkled with the wondrous perfume of the lily of virginity and chastity that, forgetful of earthly thoughts, they long to meditate on heavenly things alone; and from that lily's fragrance such love of the eternal Bridegroom arises in their hearts,

that the entireness of holy affection shuts out from them every habit of their former life. Fourthly, they have all been so distinguished by the title of the deepest poverty that scarcely or never at all do they allow themselves to satisfy the utmost need of food and clothing. (20) Fifthly, they have attained such singular grace of abstinence and taciturnity that it is no effort to them to check the motion of the flesh and to restrain their tongues; so that some of them are become so disused to talk that when necessity requires that they should speak, they scarce remember how to form the words as they ought. Sixthly, among all these qualities, they are so wondrously adorned with the virtue of patience that no adversity or tribulation, no vexation or injury breaks or changes their spirit. And seventhly, they have been found worthy to reach such a height of contemplation as to learn therein all they ought to do and avoid; and it is their happy mental experience to be rapt in God, persevering night and day in prayer and praise to Him. May the eternal God of His holy grace deign to bring so holy a beginning to a still holier end! And let this suffice for the present concerning the virgins dedicated to God and the most devout handmaids of Christ, since their wondrous life and glorious institution, which they received from the Lord Pope Gregory (at that time Bishop of Ostia) demands a work to itself, and leisure to write it.

Chapter 9

How, having changed his habit, he rebuilt the church of Saint Maria in Portiuncula; and how, on hearing the Gospel, he forsook all things, and invented and made the habit which the brethren wear

21. Meantime the Saint of God, having changed his habit, and repaired the aforesaid church, removed to another place hard by the city of Assisi, and here he began to rebuild a certain church that was dilapidated and well-nigh destroyed, nor did he leave of! what he had well begun until he had brought it all to completion. Then he betook him to another place which is called Portiuncula where in ancient days a church of the Blessed Virgin the Mother of God had been built, but now it was forsaken, and cared for by none. And when the Saint of God saw that it was thus brought to ruin, being moved with pity, for that he glowed with devotion to the Mother of all goodness, he began to dwell there [and was] diligent [in

repairing it]. Now it was in the third year from his conversion when he had finished repairing the said church; and at that time he went about wearing a kind of hermit's dress, girded with a leather girdle, carrying a staff in his hand and having shoes on his feet.

22. But when one day the Gospel, how Christ sent forth His disciples to preach, was read in that same church the Saint of God who was present and had got some inkling of the Gospel words, after the solemnities of Mass had been celebrated, humbly begged the priest to explain the Gospel to him. And when the priest had set forth to him all things in order, Saint Francis hearing that Christ's disciples ought not to possess gold, silver, or money, not to carry on their way scrip, wallet, bread or staff, not to have shoes, or two tunics, but to preach the Kingdom of God, and repentance, straightway he cried, exulting in the spirit of God: "This is what I wish, this is what I am seeking, this I long with all my inmost heart to do". Forthwith the holy Father, overflowing with joy, hastens to fulfil that saving word, nor suffers he any delay to pass before he begins devoutly to perform what he has heard. Straightway he puts his shoes off from his feet, and the staff out of his hands, and, content with one tunic, exchanges his leathern girdle for a small cord. Thenceforth he prepares him a tunic displaying the image of the Cross, that therein he may beat off all promptings of the devil; he makes it of the roughest stuff that therein he may crucify the flesh with [its] vices and sins; lastly he makes it most poor and mean, and such as by no means to excite the world's covetousness. But the other things he had heard, he yearned with the utmost diligence and reverence to perform: for he had been no deaf hearer of the Gospel, but, committing all he had heard to praiseworthy memory, he gave heed diligently to fulfil it to the letter.

Chapter 10

Of his preaching of the Gospel and proclamation of peace; and of the conversion of the first six brethren

23. Then with great fervour of spirit and joy of mind he began to preach repentance to all with simple words but largeness of heart edifying his hearers. For his word was like a blazing fire piercing through the inmost heart, and it filled the minds of all with wonder.

He seemed quite another man than he had been, and, gazing on heaven he disdained to look on earth. And this was surely a wonder; for he first began to preach in the place where when still a child he had learnt to read, and where moreover he was buried with honour the first time; in order that the happy beginning might be commended by a still happier consummation. Where he learnt there also he taught, and where he began there he made a happy end. Whensoever he preached, before setting forth God's word to the congregation he besought peace, saying, "The Lord give you peace". Peace did he ever most devoutly proclaim to men and women, to those he met and those he overtook. Wherefore many who had been haters alike of peace and of salvation, embraced peace with their whole heart, the Lord working with them, and themselves became children of peace and zealots of eternal salvation. (24) Among these, a man of Assisi of pious and simple spirit was the first devoted follower of the man of God. After him brother Bernard, accepting the embassage of peace, ran eagerly after the Saint of God to purchase the Kingdom of Heaven. For he had often given hospitality to the blessed father; and, having seen and known his life and behaviour, and been refreshed by the fragrance of his sanctity, he conceived fear and brought forth the spirit of salvation. He used to see him praying all night, most rarely sleeping, praising God and the glorious Virgin, His Mother. He wondered, and said, "Truly this man is from God". He hastened therefore to sell all he had, and gave not to his kindred, but to the poor: and, making good his title to the way of perfection, he fulfilled the counsel of the Holy Gospel, which says, "If thou will be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me". Which done, he became Saint Francis' associate in life and habit, and was always with him, until, after the brethren were multiplied, he was sent, by the tender father's order, to other regions: for *his* conversion to God was the pattern for other converts in respect of the selling of their possessions and giving to the poor.

25. Now Saint Francis rejoiced with exceeding great joy over the coming and conversion of such a man, for that the Lord seemed to be caring for him by giving him a needful companion and faithful friend. And straightway another man of Assisi followed him - one right praiseworthy in conversation, who after a little while

completed yet more holily that which he had holily begun. And after no long time he was followed by brother Giles, a simple, upright and God-fearing man who by his long continuance in holiness and his righteous and pious life has left us examples of perfect obedience, of manual toil also, of solitary life, and of holy contemplation. The number of seven was completed by the addition to these of one more, brother Philip, whose lips the Lord touched with the pebble of purity (see Isaiah 6:6) that he might speak sweet things of Him and utter things mellifluous: yea, understanding and interpreting the Holy Scriptures, though he had never learned, he became an imitator of those whom the chiefs of the Jews alleged to be ignorant and unlettered.

Chapter 11

Of Saint Francis' spirit of prophecy and his admonitions

26. Now the blessed father Francis was being filled day by day with the comfort and grace of the Holy Ghost; and with all watchfulness and care was fashioning his new sons by a new education, teaching them to tread with undeviating steps the way of holy poverty and blessed simplicity. And one day when he was marvelling at the Lord's mercy in regard to the benefits He had bestowed upon him, and was longing that the future course of his own and his disciples' life might be shown him by the Lord, he sought the place of prayer, as he was wont very often to do, and as he continued there for a long time, waiting upon the Ruler of the whole world with fear and trembling, thinking in the bitterness of his soul of the years ill spent, and often repeating the words, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," by degrees a certain unspeakable joy and surpassing sweetness began to overflow his inmost heart. He began also to stand aloof from himself; the feelings were checked and the darkness dispersed which through fear of sin had gathered in his heart; there was poured into him assurance of the forgiveness of all offences, and confidence of restoration to grace was vouchsafed to him. Then he was caught up above himself, and wholly absorbed in a certain light; the capacity of his mind was enlarged, and he beheld clearly what was to come to pass. Finally, as that sweetness faded away with the light, having been renewed in spirit, he already seemed changed into another man.

27. And so he came back and said to the brethren rejoicing: "Take courage, beloved, and rejoice in the Lord, and be not sad because ye seem few. Nor let my simplicity nor your own dismay you, forasmuch as, even as the Lord has shown me in truth, God shall make us grow into a great multitude, and shall give us manifold enlargement, even unto the ends of the world. I am constrained also for your profit to tell you what I have seen; but far more gladly would I keep silence concerning it, did not charity constrain me to report it to you. I have seen a great multitude of men coming to us, and desiring to live with us in the habit of holy life and under the rule of blessed Religion. And lo! there is still in mine ears the sound of them as they go and return at the bidding of holy obedience. I have seen as it were the ways filled with the multitude of them assembling in these parts out of almost every nation. Frenchmen are coming, Spaniards hastening, Germans and English running, and a mighty multitude of diverse others tongues are speeding." When the brethren had heard this they were filled with saving joy, both by reason of the grace the Lord God had bestowed on His Saint, and because they were ardently thirsting for the profit of their neighbours, desiring that they might daily increase therein to the end they might be saved.

28. And the Saint said to them: "Brethren, in order that we may give thanks faithfully and devoutly to the Lord our God for all His gifts, and that ye may know what manner of life that of the present and of future brethren is to be, understand the truth concerning what shall come to pass. Now, at the beginning of our life, we shall find fruits exceeding sweet and pleasant to eat; but after a while fruits less sweet and pleasant shall be offered us; and at last, some that are full of bitterness shall be given, which we shall not be able to eat, for they shall be uneatable by all men by reason of their bitterness, though they may show some outward fragrance and beauty. And verily, as I have told you, the Lord shall increase us into a great people; but at last it shall happen even as if a man should cast his nets into the sea, or into some lake, and should enclose a plenteous multitude of fish, and, when he has put them all into his boat, should, disliking to cany them all because of their multitude, choose out the larger and those that best please him to put into his vessels, and throw the rest away!

The conspicuous truth and the manifest fulfilment of all these things which the Saint of God foretold are plain enough to all who consider them in the spirit of truth. Behold how the spirit of prophecy rested on Saint Francis!

Chapter 12

How he sent them two by two through the world and how in a short time they came together again

29. At the same time also the entrance of another good man into the Religion raised their number to eight. Then blessed Francis called them all together to him, and after saying many things to them concerning the Kingdom of God, the despising of the world, the renouncing their own will and the subjection of their own bodies, he divided them by twos into four parts and said to them: "Go, dearest brethren, two and two through different parts of the world, announcing to men peace, and repentance for remission of sins; and be patient in tribulation, sure that the Lord will fulfil His purpose and promise. To those who question you answer humbly, bless them that persecute you, give thanks to them that revile and slander you, because for these things an eternal kingdom is preparing for us." And they accepting the injunction of holy obedience with joy and great gladness, fell down humbly on the ground before Saint Francis. But he embraced them affectionately and earnestly and said to each one, "Cast thy thought on the Lord and He will nourish thee". These words he used to say whenever he sent any brethren away on an "obedience".

30. Then brother Bernard took his journey with brother Giles toward Saint James; (i.e., the sanctuary of Saint James at Compostella) Saint Francis with one companion chose another part of the world; and the four others, going two and two, kept the remaining parts. But after a short while Saint Francis, desiring to see them all again, prayed to the Lord, who gathereth together the dispersed of Israel, that of His mercy He would deign to gather them together shortly. And so it came to pass that in a little while, according to his desire, and without human call they came together, giving thanks to God. And as they met together they rejoiced greatly at seeing their tender shepherd; and wondered that they had

thus assembled by one [common] desire. Then they related the good things the merciful Lord had done to them, and, if they had been in any degree negligent and ungrateful, they humbly begged and attentively received from their holy father correction and discipline. For such had ever been their custom when they came to him, nor did they hide from him the smallest thought, or even the first impulses of the heart; and, when they had fulfilled all which had been commanded them they deemed themselves unprofitable servants. For so did the spirit of purity pervade all that first school of Saint Francis, that though they might know they were doing useful, holy, and righteous actions, vain rejoicing thereat was quite out of their ken.

31. But the blessed father, embracing his sons with exceeding love, began to open to them his purpose, and to point out what the Lord had revealed to him. And straightway four other men, good and meet, were added to them and followed the Saint of God. A great rumour therefore arose among the people, and the fame of the man of God began to spread farther. And surely at that time Saint Francis and his brethren did singularly exult and exceedingly rejoice when any faithful man among the Christian people, whosoever or of what quality soever he might be, rich, poor, noble, low-born, despised, valued, wise, simple, clerk, unlettered, or layman came, led by the Spirit of God, to receive the habit of holy Religion. Men of the world also wondered greatly at all these things, and the example of humility provoked them to amend their way of life and repent of their sins. Neither low birth nor the drawback of poverty was any obstacle to his building up in the work of God those that it was the will of God to build up Who delights to be with the simple, and the outcasts of the world.

Chapter 13

How, having eleven brethren, he first wrote down the Rule; and how the Lord Pope Innocent confirmed it: and concerning the vision of the tree

32. Blessed Francis, seeing that the Lord God was daily increasing the number [of the brethren] for that very purpose, (i.e., for the salvation of men) wrote down simply and in few words for himself and for his brethren both present and future a pattern and rule of

life, using chiefly the language of the holy Gospel, after whose perfection alone he yearned. However he inserted a few other things necessarily concerned with the practice of a holy conversation. So he came to Rome with all the said brethren, longing exceedingly that what he had written might be confirmed by the Lord Pope Innocent III. There was at Rome at that time the venerable bishop of Assisi, named Guido, who honoured Saint Francis and all the brethren in all things, and revered them with special affection. When he saw Saint Francis and his brethren, he was annoyed at their coming, not knowing the cause of it: for he feared that they would leave their native country wherein the Lord had already begun to do great things by His servants; he was most glad to have such men in his diocese, and was building great expectations on their life and conduct. But when he heard the cause of their coming and understood their purpose, he rejoiced greatly in the Lord, pledging himself to give them advice and afford them help in the business. Saint Francis also waited upon the reverend Lord Bishop of Sabina (named John of Saint Paul), who among the princes and great ones of the Roman Court seemed to be a despiser of earthly and a lover of heavenly things. This man received him with kindness and charity and warmly commended his will and purpose. (33) But, being a farseeing and judicious man, he began to question Saint Francis on many points, and urged him to embrace the life of a monk or of a hermit. Saint Francis, however, as humbly as he could, refused to yield to the Cardinal's persuasion; not that he despised what had been urged upon him; but in his pious longing for another course of life he was carried on by a still loftier desire. The Cardinal wondered at his fervour, and fearing lest he might flinch from so stern a purpose, pointed him out easier ways. At length, overcome by the stedfastness of Saint Francis' entreaties, he gave in, and strove thenceforth to further his business with the Pope. At that time the Lord Pope Innocent III ruled over the Church, a glorious man, one moreover of abundant learning, renowned in discourse, fervent in zeal for righteousness in those things which the business of promoting the Christian faith demanded. When he knew the wish of the men of God, after first examining the matter, he granted their request and carried it into complete effect; and then, encouraging and admonishing them concerning many things, he blessed Saint Francis and his brethren, and said to them: "Go, and the Lord be with you, brethren, and as He shall deign to inspire

you, preach repentance to all. And when the Lord Almighty shall multiply you in number and in grace, ye shall report it to me with joy, and I will grant you more than this and shall with more confidence entrust greater things to you."

Verily the Lord was with blessed Francis whithersoever he went, cheering him with revelations, and encouraging him with benefits. For one night when he was gone to sleep he seemed to be walking along a road by the side of which stood a very lofty tree. That tree was fair and strong, exceeding thick and high. And it came to pass that as he came near to it, and stood beneath it, wondering at its beauty and height, he himself grew to such a height that he touched the top of the tree, and taking it in his hand, very easily bowed it to the ground. And so indeed it was done; since the Lord Innocent, the highest and loftiest tree in the world bowed himself so graciously to his will and petition.

Chapter 14

Of his return from Rome to the valley of Spoleto, and of his sojourn on the way

34. Saint Francis with his brethren greatly exulting in the gift and favour of so great a father and lord gave thanks to Almighty God who setteth the humble on high and cheereth the sorrowful with deliverance. And he went straightway to visit the threshold of Saint Peter; and, having finished his prayer, left the city and set out with his companions on the journey toward the valley of Spoleto. And as they thus went along they talked together of what great gifts the most merciful God had given them; of their gracious reception by the Vicar of Christ, the Lord and father of all Christendom; of their power to fulfil his admonitions and commands; of how they might sincerely observe and unfailingly guard the Rule they had received; of how they should walk in all holiness and religion before the Most High; and finally of how their life and behaviour might by increase of the holy virtues be an example to their neighbours. And when Christ's new disciples had held sufficient disputation on such matters in the school of Humility, the day was far spent and the hour was past. Then, hungry and tired out with their journey, they came to a lonely spot, where they could find no refreshment

because it was very far from the dwellings of men. And straightway, God's grace providing for them, a man met them bringing bread in his hand, which he gave them, and went away. But they wondered in their hearts, for they knew him not, and devoutly admonished one another to have greater trust in God's mercy. They took food, and, not a little refreshed thereby, came to a place near the city of Orte where they stayed about fifteen days. Some of them would go into the city to get necessary victuals, and carry back to the other brethren what little they had been able to gather from door to door, and they all ate it together, with thanksgiving and with joyful hearts. If anything were left over (since they could not give it to any one) they hid it in a tomb where bodies of the dead had been laid in days gone by, so that they might eat of it again.

35. That place was deserted and forsaken and few people or none frequented it. Great was their exultation at seeing and having nothing which might give them vain or carnal delight. Wherefore in that place they began to have intercourse with holy Poverty, and, comforted above measure by the lack of all things that are of the world, they determined to cleave to her for ever everywhere, even as they were doing there. And because, having laid aside all care for earthly things, God's comfort alone was their delight, they decreed and established that whatsoever tribulations might shake them, and whatsoever temptations might urge them they would never shrink from her embraces. But though the pleasantness of the place (which has no small power to weaken true strength of mind) did not hold back their affections, yet, lest a longer stay might entangle them even in the semblance of ownership, they withdrew thence, and, following their happy father, came at that time into the valley of Spoleto. They discussed together, those true followers of righteousness, whether they ought to live among men, or betake them to solitary places. But Saint Francis, who trusted not in his own skill, but prefaced every business with holy prayer, chose not to live for himself alone, but for Him who died for all, knowing himself to have been sent for this, that he might gain for God souls that the devil was trying to take away.

Chapter 15

Of the fame of Saint Francis, and of the conversion of many to God.

How the Order was called that of the Lesser Brethren (Friars Minor); and how blessed Francis fashioned those entering the Religion

36. Francis, therefore, Christ's valiant knight, went round the cities and fortresses proclaiming the Kingdom of God, preaching peace, teaching salvation and repentance for the remission of sins, not with plausible words of human wisdom, but with the learning and power of the Spirit. The Apostolic authority which had been granted him enabled him to act in all things with greater confidence, without using flattery or seducing blandishments. Incapable of caressing the faults of certain men, he could pierce them; incapable of showing favour to the lives of sinners, he could smite them with sharp reproof because he had first persuaded himself by practice of that which he endeavoured to commend to others by his words; and without fear of any reprover he uttered the truth most confidently, so that even the most learned men, mighty in renown and dignity, wondered at his discourses and were smitten by his presence with wholesome fear. Men ran, women too ran, clerks hastened, and Religious made speed to see and hear the Saint of God who seemed to all to be a man of another world. People of every age and either sex hastened to behold the wonders which the Lord was newly working in the world by His servant. Surely at that time, whether by holy Francis' presence or by the fame [of him], it seemed that, as it were, a new light had been sent from heaven on earth, scattering the universal blackness of darkness which had so seized on well-nigh the whole of that region, that scarce any one knew whither he must go. For such depth of forgetfulness of God and such slumber of neglect of His commandments had oppressed almost all that they could scarce endure to be roused, even slightly, from their old and inveterate sins.

37. He darted his beams like a star shining in the gloom of night, and as it were the morning spread over the darkness; and thus it came to pass that in a short time the face of the whole province was changed, and she appeared of more cheerful countenance, the former foulness having everywhere been laid aside. The former dryness was done away and in the field erstwhile hard the crops sprang up quickly; the untended vine began moreover to put forth shoots of divine fragrance, and, after bearing blossoms of sweetness, yielded fruits of honour and virtue together. Everywhere

thanksgiving and the voice of praise were resounding in such wise that many cast away the cares of the world, and in the life and teaching of the most blessed father Francis gained knowledge of themselves, and aspired to love of their Creator and reverence for Him. Many among the people, nobles and plebeians, clerks and lay-folk, pierced by God's inspiration, began to come to holy Francis, longing evermore to fight under his discipline and leadership: all of whom the Saint of God like a plenteous stream of heavenly grace watered with anointing showers, and beautified the field of their hearts with flowers of virtue. Truly an excellent craftsman; after whose pattern, rule and teaching, heralded with noteworthy proclamation, Christ's Church is being renewed in either sex, and is triumphing in a threefold army of men who are to be saved. For he assigned to all their rule of life, and pointed out truly the way to be saved in every station.

38. But the chief matter of our discourse is the Order which as well from charity as by profession he took upon him and maintained. What then shall we say of it? He himself first planted the Order of Friars Minor (Lesser Brethren) and on that very occasion gave it that name; since (as is well known) it was written in the Rule: "And be they lesser": and in that hour, when those words were uttered, he said: "I will that this brotherhood be called the Order of Lesser Brethren" (Friars Minor). And truly they were "lesser," for, being subject to all, they ever sought for lowly dwellings, and for occupations in the discharge of which they might appear in some sort to suffer wrong, that they might deserve to be so founded on the solid basis of true humility that in happy disposition the spiritual building of all the virtues might arise in them. Verily on the foundation of stedfastness a noble structure of charity arose, wherein living stones heaped together from all parts of the world were built up into an habitation of the Holy Spirit. Oh, with what ardour of charity did Christ's new disciples burn! What love of their pious fellowship flourished among them! For whenever they came together in any place, or met one another in the way, (as is usual) there sprang up a shoot of spiritual love scattering over all love the seeds of true affection. What can I say more? Their embraces were chaste, their feelings gentle, their kisses holy, their intercourse sweet, their laughter modest, their look cheerful, their eye single, their spirit submissive, their tongue peaceable, their answer soft,

their purpose identical, their obedience ready, their hand untiring. (39) And for that they despised all earthly things, and never loved one another with private love, but poured forth their whole affection in common, the business of all alike was to give up themselves as the price of supplying their brethren's need. They came together with longing, they dwelt together with delight; but the parting of companions was grievous on both sides, a bitter divorce, a cruel separation. But these obedient knights durst put nothing before the orders of holy Obedience, and before the word of command was finished they were preparing to fulfil the order; not knowing how to distinguish between precept and precept, they ran, as it were, headlong to perform whatever was enjoined, all contradiction being put aside.

The followers of most holy Poverty, having nothing, loved nothing, and therefore had no fear of losing anything. They were content with a tunic only, patched sometimes within and without; no elegance was seen in it, but great abjectness and vileness, to the end they might wholly appear therein as crucified to the world. They were girt with a cord, and wore drawers of common stuff; and they were piously purposed to remain in that state, and to have nothing more. Everywhere, therefore, they were secure, nor kept in suspense by any fear; distracted by no care, they awaited the morrow without solicitude, nor, though oftentimes in great straits in their journeyings, were they ever in anxiety about a night's lodging. For when, as often happened, they lacked a lodging in the coldest weather, an oven sheltered them, or, at least, they lay hid by night humbly in underground places or in caves. And by day those who knew how to, worked with their hands, and they stayed in lepers' houses, or in other decent places, serving all with humility and devotion.

40. They would exercise no calling whence scandal might arise, but, by always doing holy, just, virtuous, and useful deeds, they provoked all with whom they lived to copy their humility and patience. The virtue of patience had so compassed them about that they rather sought to be where they might suffer persecution of their bodies than where they might be uplifted by the world's favour, if their holiness was acknowledged or praised. For many times when they were reviled, insulted, stripped naked, scourged,

bound or imprisoned, they would not avail themselves of any one's protection, but bore all so bravely that the voice of praise and thanksgiving alone sounded in their mouth. Scarcely, or not at all, did they cease from praising God and from prayer; but, recalling by constant examination what they had done, they rendered thanks to God for what they had done well, and groans and tears for what they had neglected or unadvisedly committed. They deemed themselves forsaken by God unless they knew themselves to be constantly visited in their devotions by their wonted piety. And so when they would apply themselves to prayer they sought the support of certain appliances lest their prayer should be disturbed by sleep stealing over them. Some were held up by hanging ropes, some surrounded themselves with instruments of iron, while others shut themselves up in wooden cages. If ever their sobriety were disturbed (as commonly happens) by abundance of food or drink, or if, tired by a journey, they overpassed, though but a little, the bounds of necessity, they tortured themselves most severely by many days' abstinence. In short they made it their business to keep down the promptings of the flesh with such maceration that they shrank not from often stripping themselves naked in the sharpest frost, and piercing their whole body with thorns so as to draw blood. (41) And so vigorously did they set at naught all earthly things that they scarce submitted to take the barest necessaries of life, and shrank not from any hardships, having been parted from bodily comfort by such long usage. Amid all this they followed peace and gentleness with all men, and, ever behaving themselves modestly and peaceably, were most zealous in avoiding all occasions of scandal. For they scarcely spoke even in time of need, nor did any jesting or idle words proceed out of their mouth, in order that nothing immodest or unseemly might by any means be found in all their behaviour and conversation. Their every act was disciplined, their every movement modest, all the senses had been so mortified in them that they scarce submitted to hear or see anything but what their purpose demanded; their eyes were fixed on the ground, their mind clave to Heaven. No envy, malice, rancour, evil-speaking, suspicion or bitterness had place in them, but great concord, continual quietness, thanksgiving, and the voice of praise were in them. Such were the teachings wherewith the tender father, not by word and tongue only, but above all in deed and truth, was fashioning his new sons.

Chapter 16

Of his sojourn at Rivo Torto and of his guarding of Poverty

42. The blessed Francis with the other brethren repaired to a place called Rivo Torto by the city of Assisi. Here there was a forsaken hovel beneath whose shelter those most strenuous despisers of large and beautiful houses abode, and protected themselves from storms of rain. For, as saith the Saint, one ascends to Heaven quicker from a hovel than from a palace. In that same place there dwelt with the blessed father all his sons and brethren in much toil and in lack of all things; very often, wholly deprived of the solace of bread, they were content with turnips only, which in their distress they begged for here and there over the plain of Assisi. Their dwelling was so extremely cramped that they could scarce sit down or rest in it. There was not a sound of murmuring or complaining at these things; but their heart being at peace their mind was filled with joy and kept them patient. Saint Francis most carefully examined himself and his companions daily, nay continually; he suffered not that aught of wantonness should linger in them, and drove away all negligence from their hearts. Rigid in discipline he guarded himself watchfully at every hour; for if ever (as is usual) any fleshly temptation assailed him he would plunge in winter into a pit full of ice and remain there until all fleshly taint withdrew from him. And the others most eagerly followed the example of such mortification. (43) He taught them not only to mortify vices and to keep down the promptings of the flesh but also to control even the outward organs of sense whereby death enters the soul. For when at that time (A.D. 1209) the Emperor Otho [IV] was passing through those quarters with great stir and pomp to receive the crown of the earthly Empire, the most holy father and his companions in the said hovel were close to the road by which the Emperor was passing; but he did not go out to look, nor did he allow any to do so, save one who was most stedfastly to announce to the Emperor that this glory of his would endure but for a short time. For the glorious Saint was dwelling in himself, and, walking in the amplitude of his heart, was preparing in himself an habitation meet for God; wherefore no outward clamour caught his ears, nor could any sound disturb or interrupt the vast business he had in hand. The Apostolic authority was strong in him, and therefore he utterly refused to flatter kings

and princes. He ever applied himself to holy simplicity nor did he allow the straitness of his abode to cramp the breadth of his heart.

44. He wrote the names of the brethren on the beams of the dwelling so that each if he wished to rest or pray might recognise his own place, and so that the painful smallness of the space might not cause the silence of the mind to be troubled. Now one day while they were staying there a man leading an ass chanced to come to the shelter where the man of God was dwelling with his companions, and in order not to be driven away, he urged his ass to go in, saying these words: "Go in, for we shall do good to this place". When Saint Francis heard these words and perceived what the man meant, he was moved in spirit; for the man thought that the brethren intended to stay there [as owners] in order to enlarge the place, and "add house to house". And Saint Francis went out forthwith, and forsook that hovel, because of what the countryman had said, and he removed to another place not far from it called Portiuncula, where, as was said above, the Church of Saint Mary was that he had repaired long before. He would have nothing in the way of property that he might the more fully possess all things in the Lord.

Chapter 17

How the blessed Francis taught the brethren to pray; and concerning the obedience and purity of the brethren

45. At that time the brethren entreated Saint Francis to teach them to pray, because, walking in simplicity of spirit, they knew not as yet the offices of the Church. And he said to them: "When ye pray, say, 'Our Father' and 'We worship Thee, O Christ, [here] and at all Thy churches which are in all the world, and we bless Thee for that by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world'". And this the brethren, dutiful disciples of their master, were most careful to observe, for not only those things which blessed Francis told them by way of brotherly advice or fatherly command, but even those things which he was thinking of or meditating on, if they could get to know them by any token, they strove most effectually to fulfil. For their blessed father used to tell them that true obedience is not only uttered, but thought out: not only enjoined, but desired. That

is, if a subject brother should not only hear the voice of a superior brother but should understand his will, he ought forthwith to concentrate himself wholly on obedience and do what he understands by any sign to be the superior's will.

Moreover, in whatsoever place a church might be built, even if they were not present there, yet if they could in anywise see it from afar they bowed down toward it flat on the ground, and inclining the inward and the outward man, worshipped the Almighty, saying, "We worship Thee, O Christ, [here] and at all Thy churches"; as the holy father had taught them. And (a thing not less to be wondered at) wherever they beheld a cross, or a mark of a cross, whether on the ground, on a wall, on trees, or in hedges by the way, they did that same thing. (46) For holy simplicity had so filled them, innocency of life was so teaching them, purity of heart so possessed them that they were utterly ignorant of duplicity of mind. For as they were one in faith so they were one in spirit, one in will, one in charity: agreement in disposition, harmonious behaviour, the practice of the virtues, conformity of mind and piety in action ever prevailed among them.

For once when they were often confessing their sins to a secular priest who was deservedly infamous and a man to be scorned by all for his flagitious deeds, though his wickedness had been made known to them by many they would by no means believe it, nor did they on that account omit to confess their sins to him as usual, or to pay him due reverence. And when one day he (or another priest) had said to one of the brethren, "See, brother, that thou be not a hypocrite," that brother immediately believed, by reason of the priest's words, that he was a hypocrite, and therefore day and night he lamented, being moved with exceeding grief. And when the brethren asked him what might be the meaning of such great sadness and such unwonted mourning, he answered: "A priest has said a thing to me which causes me such grief that I can hardly think of anything else". But the brethren tried to comfort him and urged him not to have such a belief. But he said, "What is it you say, brethren? It is a priest who said those words. Can a priest lie? Since then a priest lies not we must needs believe that what he has said is true." And so he continued a long time in such simplicity, but was calmed at length by the blessed father's words, who explained

to him the priest's saying and wisely made excuse for the priest's intention. It was scarce possible for any brother to be in such trouble of mind that all the clouds would not depart and the sky be clear again at his bright words.

Chapter 18

Of the fiery chariot; and of blessed Francis' knowledge of things absent

47. At that time the brethren, walking before God with simplicity and before men with confidence, were deemed worthy to be gladdened by a revelation from God. For whilst, kindled by the fire of the Holy Ghost, not only at the appointed hours but also at every hour (since earthly solicitude and troublesome anxious cares had little hold on them) they chanted "Our Father" in melody of the spirit with suppliant voice, one night the most blessed father Francis absented himself from them in body. And lo! about the hour of midnight, while some of the brethren were at rest and others were praying earnestly in silence, a fiery chariot of dazzling brightness came through the door of the house and turned about this way and that two or three times within the dwelling. Above it rested a huge globe, like the sun, which lit up the night. The watchers were dazed, the sleepers were startled: and they felt a clearness of heart not less than of body. They all came together, and began to ask one another what this might be: but by the power and grace of that great light the conscience of one was disclosed to another; and finally they understood and knew that it was the soul of their holy father which had shone with such dazzling radiance, and that for the grace of his special purity and the great tenderness of his care for his sons he had been found worthy to obtain from the Lord the blessing of so great a gift.

48. And indeed they had often had proof of this by manifest tokens and had found that the secrets of their hearts were not hidden from the most holy father. O how often, not by any man's teaching, but by revelation of the Holy Ghost did he know what absent brethren were doing, did he open the hidden things of their heart and explore their conscience! O how many did he admonish in dreams ordering them what they were to do and forbidding what they were to avoid! O of how many did he foretell evil whose present conduct

was good in appearance! So also, forecasting that the wickednesses of many would end, he announced that the grace of salvation would come to them. Nay more, if any one for his spirit of purity and simplicity deserved to be distinguished, he enjoyed the singular consolation of beholding Saint Francis in a way of which the rest had no experience. I will relate one instance, known to me by the report of faithful witnesses. Once when Brother John of Florence had been appointed by Saint Francis Minister of the brethren in Provence and had been holding a chapter of the brethren in that same province, the Lord God of His wonted mercy opened to him the door of utterance and made all the brethren well disposed and attentive to hear. Among the brethren was a priest named Monaldo (renowned by report but yet more renowned in life) whose virtue was founded on humility, fostered by frequent prayer and preserved by the shield of patience. Brother Antony was also present at that chapter, whose mind the Lord opened, so that he might understand the Scriptures, and utter among all the people words sweeter than honey and the honeycomb concerning Jesus. While he was most earnestly and devoutly preaching to the brethren on the text, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," brother Monaldo looked toward the door of the house wherein the brethren were assembled, and there saw with his bodily eyes blessed Francis raised up in the air, with his hands stretched out as on a cross, blessing the brethren. All who were present seemed to be filled with the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and the saving joy which they experienced availed to render credible to them what they were told concerning the sight and presence of their most glorious father.

49. As to his knowledge of the secrets of other men's hearts, among many cases in which experience of this was had, let one be quoted concerning which no doubt can arise. A brother named Ricerio, noble by birth but nobler by conduct, a lover of God and a despiser of himself, was led, by the eager wish of a dutiful spirit, perfectly to attain and possess the favour of holy father Francis; but he greatly feared that in consequence of some hidden judgment Saint Francis shrank from him and therefore made him a stranger to the favour of his love. That brother considered (being a God-fearing man) that if Saint Francis loved any one with the deepest charity, such a one would also be worthy to deserve God's favour, but that, on the other hand, any one to whom Saint Francis did not show himself well

disposed and benign would fall under the wrath of the Judge on high. These thoughts the said brother kept turning over in his mind, of these things did he frequently hold silent converse with himself, disclosing the secret of his cogitation to none. (50) But one day, when the blessed father was praying in his cell, and Ricerio was come to that place distressed by his wonted cogitation, the Saint of God both knowing of his arrival, and understanding his thoughts at once sent for him and said: "Let no temptation disturb thee, my son; let no cogitation afflict thee, for thou art most dear to me; and know that among those specially dear to me thou art worthy of my affection and intimacy. Come in to me confidently whenever thou wilt, and let my friendship give thee confidence to speak." Ricerio wondered with the utmost amazement, and thenceforward, having become more reverent, as he increased in the holy father's favour, so he began to have a larger trust in God's mercy.

O holy father how must those grieve for thy absence who have no hope at all ever to find thy like on earth! Help, we pray, by intercession those whom thou seest to be wrapped in the contagion of sin. Though thou wast already filled with the spirit of all the righteous, foreseeing the future, and knowing the present, thou didst ever bear the image of holy simplicity, that thou mightest fly from all boastfulness.

But let us resume the thread of our story and return to the foregoing matter.

Chapter 19

Of Saint Francis' watchful guarding of the brethren; of his self-contempt and true humility

51. The most blessed man Francis came back in the body to his brethren, from whom (as has been said) he never withdrew himself in the spirit. He would search out the deeds of all with careful and diligent examination, being ever moved toward his subjects by a fruitful curiosity and leaving nothing unpunished where he found that anything wrong had been done. And his practice was first to decide concerning spiritual vices, next to give judgment on corporal vices, and lastly to root out all occasions which are wont to give

entrance to sin.

With all zeal and with all carefulness did he guard holy Poverty, his Lady, and in order that he might never attain to superfluity he would not allow any vessel to be found in the house if without it he could by any means avoid being subject to the extremity of need. For he used to say that it was impossible to satisfy need without yielding obedience to pleasure. He hardly ever, or most rarely, allowed himself cooked food; and if he did, he would often mix it with ashes, or quench its flavour with cold water. O how often, when walking through the world to preach the Gospel, if invited to dinner by great Princes (who revered him with wondrous affection) would he taste a little meat (to observe the holy Gospel), and then, making a show of eating, put his hand to his mouth and drop the remainder into his bosom, so that none might notice what he was doing!

What shall I say as to his drinking of wine, when he would not even allow himself to drink his fill of water when consumed by thirst? (52) Wherever he received hospitality he would allow no coverlet or clothes to be put over his resting-place; but the bare ground, his tunic only interposed, received his bare limbs; and when at times he refreshed his slight frame with the benefit of sleep, he would often sleep in a sitting posture, not otherwise reclining, and using a piece of wood or stone for a pillow. If appetite (as it is wont) had craved for some particular food, he could hardly be persuaded to eat it afterwards. It happened once that he was entering Assisi when he had somewhat recovered his strength after an illness during which he had eaten a little flesh of chicken; and on reaching the city gate he bade a brother who was with him tie a rope round his neck and drag him thus like a robber all through the city, shouting like a crier, and saying, "Come, look at the glutton who has been battening on poultry that he has been eating when you did not know it!" Many therefore flocked to see so strange a sight, and said as they wept together and heaved repeated sighs, "Woe to us wretches whose whole life is spent in bloodshed, who nourish our hearts and bodies in wantonness and drunkenness!" And so they were pricked in heart, and urged by so signal an example to a better way of life. (53) Many such-like things he often did in order both to attain perfect self-contempt and to invite others to attain perpetual

honour. He was become unto himself as a rejected vessel: encumbered by no fear nor anxiety for the body he most strenuously exposed it to affronts, that he might not be driven by love for it to covet any temporal thing. A true despiser of himself, he profitably instructed all by word and example to despise themselves.

For what did he do? While he was being magnified, and, with praiseworthy judgment, extolled by all, he alone counted himself the vilest of men, he alone most fervently despised himself. For oftentimes while all men were paying him honour he was wounded by exceeding grief, and, casting out the favour of men, he would, contrariwise, get some one to rebuke him. He would call one of the brethren to him and say, "On thy obedience I bid thee revile me harshly and tell me the truth in opposition to the lies of these men". And when that brother, though unwillingly, called him a boor, and a venal and unprofitable wretch, he would answer smiling and heartily applauding him, "The Lord bless thee, because thou art saying what is most true, for such things it is meet for the son of Peter di Bernardone to hear". Speaking thus he would recall his humble origin. (54) And that he might perfectly show himself to be contemptible, and afford to the rest an example of true confession, he was not ashamed, when he had offended in anything, to confess it when he was preaching before all the people. Nay more, if he chanced to have any evil thought about any one, or happened to let fall an angry word, he would straightway confess the sin to him against whom he had thought or said anything evil, and beg his pardon. His conscience (witness of all innocence) guarded itself with all solicitude and did not let him rest until soothing words had healed the mental wound. Assuredly in his noteworthy deeds of every kind he craved not notoriety but profit, avoiding admiration by every means that he might never fall into vanity.

Alas for us who thus have lost thee, worthy father, pattern of all well-doing and humility! Surely by a just judgment have we lost him whom when we had him we cared not to know!

Chapter 20

Of the longing whereby he was moved to receive martyrdom, journeying

first to Spain and then to Syria: and how God through him delivered the sailors from peril by multiplying the provisions

55. Glowing with the love of God, the most blessed father Francis was ever zealous to set his hand to brave deeds; and, walking with heart enlarged in the way of God's commandments, he longed to reach the height of perfection. Accordingly in the sixth year of his conversion, burning with the utmost desire for holy martyrdom, he determined to pass over to the regions of Syria to preach the Christian faith, and repentance to the Saracens and the other unbelievers. After going on board a ship in order to journey thither, he and his fellow-travellers found themselves by reason of contrary winds in the regions of Sclavonia. But when he saw that he was baulked of his great desire, after a short interval he besought some sailors who were going to Ancona to take him with them, since hardly any ship could sail to Syria that year. They however obstinately refused, for lack of payment, but the Saint of God, with full trust in the Lord's kindness, went on board by stealth with his companion. Then by God's providence a man came on board without any one's knowledge bringing the necessary provisions, and he called to him one of the crew who feared God and said, "Take all these things with thee and faithfully give them to those poor men in hiding on the ship in time of need". And so it came to pass that when a great storm had arisen and the crew who had toiled in rowing many days had eaten all their provisions, those only of the poor man Francis were left: and these by God's grace and power were so multiplied that although the voyage lasted several days more, they were abundantly sufficient to supply the wants of all until they reached the port of Ancona. So when the sailors saw that they had escaped the perils of the sea through God's servant Francis, they gave thanks to Almighty God who ever shows Himself in His servants wonderful and worthy to be loved.

56. Francis the servant of the high God quitted the sea and walked on the land, and cleaving it with the ploughshare of the word, sowed the seed of life and brought forth blessed fruit. For straightway a number of good and fit men, clerical and lay, flying from the world and manfully crushing the Devil, devotedly followed Francis in life and purpose by the grace and will of the Most High. But though the Gospel vine-branch might produce from itself

abundance of the choicest fruits, nevertheless the lofty purpose to attain martyrdom and the ardent longing for it in nowise grew cold in him; and before long he took his journey toward Morocco that he might preach Christ's Gospel to the Miramamolin (otherwise Miramolin; a title, not a proper name) and his associates. He was urged by such longing that he sometimes left the companion of his pilgrimage behind and would hasten on, inebriated in spirit, to fulfil his purpose. But when he had already reached Spain, the good God (who was pleased of His mere goodness to be mindful of me and of many) withstood him to the face, and, that he might proceed no farther, recalled him by a threatened illness from the journey he had begun, (57) and on his return shortly afterwards to the Church of Saint Maria de Portiuncula, some men of learning and some of noble birth joined him most acceptably. These, since he was a man of the noblest and discreetest temper, he treated with fitting distinction, most tenderly paying to each one his due. Verily, being endowed with eminent discretion, he had wise regard in all things to the claims of each man's dignity. But he could not yet rest without even more fervently following the blessed impulse of his spirit; and in the thirteenth year of his conversion, when severe and daily combats were raging between Christians and pagans, he took a companion with him and went to the regions of Syria; nor did he fear to present himself to the sight of the Soldan of the Saracens. (A.D. 1219) But who can tell with what stedfastness of mind he stood before him, with what power of spirit he spoke to him, with what eloquence and confidence he answered those who were reviling the Christian law? For before he came to the Soldan he had been seized by the [Soldan's] associates, insulted and beaten, yet was he not afraid, nor feared the threat of torments, nor blenched at the menace of death. But though he was shamefully treated by many who were moved with bitter hostility and dislike, he was most honourably received by the Soldan. For he paid him what honour he could and tried to sway his mind toward worldly riches by the offer of many gifts. But when the Soldan saw that he most stoutly held all such things in contempt like dung, he was filled with the utmost amazement and gazed on him as a man unlike almost all men. He was deeply stirred by his words and heard him very willingly. But in all this the Lord did not fulfil Saint Francis' desire, reserving for him the privilege of an unparalleled favour.

Chapter 21

Of his preaching to the birds and of the obedience of the creatures

58. During the time when (as has been said) many joined themselves to the brethren the most blessed father Francis was journeying through the valley of Spoleto, and came to a spot near Bevagna where a very great number of birds of different sorts were gathered together, viz., doves, rooks and those other birds that are called in the vulgar tongue *monade*. (Al. *monacle, monedule, monacule*) When he saw them, being a man of the most fervent temper and also very tender and affectionate toward all the lower and irrational creatures, Francis the most blessed servant of God left his companions in the way and ran eagerly toward the birds. When he was come close to them and saw that they were awaiting him, he gave them his accustomed greeting. But, not a little surprised that the birds did not fly away (as they are wont to do) he was filled with exceeding joy and humbly begged them to hear the word of God: and, after saying many things to them he added: "My brother birds, much ought ye to praise your Creator, and ever to love Him who has given you feathers for clothing, wings for flight, and all that ye had need of. God has made you noble among His creatures, for He has given you a habitation in the purity of the air, and, whereas ye neither sow nor reap, He Himself doth still protect and govern you without any care of your own." On this (as he himself and the brethren who had been with him used to say) those little birds rejoicing in wondrous fashion, after their nature, began to stretch out their necks, to spread their wings, to open their beaks and to gaze on him. And then he went to and fro amidst them, touching their heads and bodies with his tunic. At length he blessed them, and, having made the sign of the cross, gave them leave to fly away to another place. But the blessed father went on his way with his companions, rejoicing and giving thanks to God Whom all creatures humbly acknowledge and revere. Being now, by grace, become simple (though he was not so by nature) he began to charge himself with negligence for not having preached to the birds before, since they listened so reverently to God's word. And so it came to pass that from that day he diligently exhorted all winged creatures, all beasts, all reptiles and even creatures insensible, to praise and love the Creator, since daily, on his calling on the Saviour's name,

he had knowledge of their obedience by his own experience. (59) One day (for instance) when he was come to the fortress called Alviano to set forth the word of God, he went up on an eminence where all could see him, and asked for silence. But though all the company held their peace and stood reverently by, a great number of swallows who were building their nests in that same place were chirping and chattering loudly. And, as Francis could not be heard by the men for their chirping, he spoke to the birds and said: "My sisters, the swallows, it is now time for me to speak too, because you have been saying enough all this time. Listen to the word of God and be in silence, and quiet, until the sermon is finished!" And those little birds (to the amazement and wonder of all the bystanders) kept silence forthwith, and did not move from that place till the preaching was ended. So those men, when they had seen that sign, were filled with the greatest admiration, and said: "Truly this man is a Saint, and a friend of the Most High". And with the utmost devotion they hastened at least to touch his clothes, praising and blessing God.

And it is certainly wonderful how even the irrational creatures recognised his tender affection towards them and perceived beforehand the sweetness of his love; (60) for once when he was staying at the fortress of Greccio, one of the brethren brought him a live leveret that had been caught in a snare; and when the blessed man saw it he was moved with compassion and said: "Brother leveret, come to me. Why didst thou let thyself be so deceived?" And forthwith the leveret, on being released by the brother who was holding him, fled to the holy man, and, without being driven thither by any one, lay down in his bosom as being the safest place. When he had rested there a little while the holy father, caressing him with maternal affection, let him go, so that he might freely return to the woodland. At last, after the leveret had been put down on the ground many times, and had every time returned to the holy man's bosom, he bade the brethren carry it into a wood which was hard by. Something of the same kind happened with a rabbit (which is a very wild creature) when he was on the island in the lake of Perugia. He was also moved by the same feeling of pity towards fish, for if they had been caught, and he had the opportunity, he would throw them back alive into the water, bidding them beware of being caught a second time.

61. Once accordingly when he was sitting in a boat near a port on the lake of Rieti, a fisherman caught a big fish called a tench, and respectfully offered it to him. He took it up joyfully and kindly, began to call it by the name of brother, and then putting it back out of the boat into the water he began devoutly to bless the name of the Lord. And while he continued thus for some time in prayer, the said fish played about in the water close to the boat, and did not leave the place where Francis had put him, until, having finished his prayer, the holy man of God gave him leave to depart. Even so did the glorious father Francis, walking in the way of obedience, and taking upon him perfectly the yoke of Divine submission, acquire great dignity before God in that the creatures obeyed him. For water was even turned to wine for him when he was once in grievous sickness at the hermitage of Sant' Urbano; (in the beighbourhood of Narni in Umbria) and when he had tasted it he got well so easily that all believed it to be a Divine miracle, as indeed it was. And truly he is a Saint whom the creatures thus obey and at whose nod the very elements are transmuted for other uses.

Chapter 22

Of his preaching at Ascoli; and how the sick were healed in his absence by things that his hand had touched

62. At the time when (as has been said) the venerable father Francis preached to the birds, as he went round about the cities and fortresses scattering seeds of blessing everywhere, he came to the city of Ascoli. Here, when according to his wont he was most fervently uttering the word of God, almost all the people, changed by the right hand of the Highest, were filled with such grace and devotion that in their eagerness to see and hear him they trod on one another. And at that time thirty men, clerks and lay-people, received from him the habit of holy Religion. Such was the faith of men and women, such their devotion of mind toward God's Saint that he who could but touch his garment called himself happy. If he entered any city the clergy were joyful, the bells were rung, the men exulted, the women rejoiced together, the children clapped their hands and often took boughs of trees and went in procession to meet him singing Psalms. Heretical wickedness was confounded, the Church's faith was magnified; and while the faithful shouted for

joy, the heretics slunk away. For the tokens of holiness that appeared in him were such, that no one durst speak against him; seeing that the crowds hung on him alone. Amidst and above all else he pronounced that the faith of the Holy Roman Church, wherein alone consists the salvation of all that are to be saved, must be kept, revered, and imitated. He revered the priests and embraced the whole hierarchy with exceeding affection. (63) The people would offer him loaves to bless, and would keep them for long after, and by tasting them they were healed of divers sicknesses. Many times also in their great faith in him they cut up his tunic so that he was left almost naked; and, what is more wonderful, some even recovered their health by means of objects which the holy father had touched with his hand, as happened in the case of a woman who lived in a little village near Arezzo. She was with child, and when the time of her delivery came was in labour for several days and hung between life and death in incredible suffering. Her neighbours and kinsfolk had heard that the blessed Francis was going to a certain hermitage and would pass by that way. But while they were waiting for him it chanced that he went to the place by a different way, for he was riding because he was weak and ill. When he reached the place he sent back the horse to the man who had lent it him out of charity, by a certain brother named Peter. Brother Peter, in bringing the horse back, passed through the place where the suffering woman was. The inhabitants on seeing him ran to him in haste, thinking he was the blessed Francis, but were exceedingly disappointed when they found he was not. At length they began to inquire together if anything might be found which the blessed Francis had touched with his hand; and after spending a long time over this they at last hit upon the reins which he had held in his hand when riding: so they took the bit out of the mouth of the horse on which the holy father had sat, and laid the reins which he had touched with his own hands upon the woman: and forthwith her peril was removed and she brought forth her child with joy and in safety.

64. Gualfreduccio, who lived at Castel della Pieve, a religious man fearing and worshipping God with all his house, had by him a cord wherewith the blessed Francis had once been girded. Now it came to pass that in that place many men and not a few women were suffering from various sicknesses and fevers; and this man went

through the houses of the sick, and, after dipping the cord in water or mixing with water some of the strands, made the sufferers drink of it, and so, in Christ's name, they all recovered. Now these things were done in blessed Francis' absence, besides many others which we could in nowise unfold in the longest discourse. But a few of those things which the Lord our God deigned to work by means of his presence we will briefly insert in this work.

Chapter 23

How he healed a cripple at Toscanella and a paralytic at Narni

65. Once when Francis the Saint of God was making a long circuit through various regions to preach the Gospel of God's kingdom he came to a city called Toscanella. Here, while he was sowing the seed of life, as he was wont, he was entertained by a knight of that same city whose only son was a cripple and weak in all his body. Though the child was of tender years, he had passed the age of weaning; but he still remained in a cradle. But the boy's father, seeing the man of God to be endued with such holiness, humbly fell at his feet and besought him to heal his son. Francis, deeming himself to be unprofitable and unworthy of such power and grace, for a long time refused to do it. At last, conquered by the urgency of the knight's entreaties, after offering up prayer he laid his hand on the boy, blesssd him, and lifted him up. And in the sight of all the boy straightway arose whole in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and began to walk hither and thither about the house.

66. Once when Francis the man of God had come to Narni and was staying there several days, a man of that city named Peter was lying in bed paralysed. For five months he had been so completely deprived of the use of all his limbs that he could in nowise lift himself up or move at all; and thus, having lost all help from feet, hands and head, he could only move his tongue and open his eyes. But on hearing that Saint Francis was come to Narni he sent a messenger to the Bishop to ask that he would, for Divine compassion's sake, be pleased to send the servant of God Most High to him, for he trusted that he would be delivered, by the sight and presence of the Saint, from the infirmity whereby he was holden. And so indeed it came to pass; for when the blessed Francis was

come to him he made the sign of the cross over him from head to feet, and forthwith drove away all his sickness and restored him to his former health.

Chapter 24

How he gave sight to a blind woman, and at Gubbio straightened another, whose hands were contracted

67. A woman of the above-named city who had been struck blind was found worthy of receiving the longed-for light immediately on the blessed Francis' making the sign of the cross over her eyes. At Gubbio there was a woman both whose hands were contracted so that she could do nothing with them. As soon as she knew that Saint Francis had entered the city she ran to him, and with miserable and woe-begone face showed him her deformed hands and began to pray that he would deign to touch them He was moved with compassion, touched her hand and healed them. And straightway the woman returned joyfully to her house, made a cheesecake with her own hands and offered it to the holy man; he took a little in token of kindness, and bade her and her household eat the rest.

Chapter 25

How he delivered a brother from the falling sickness, or from a devil; and how he delivered a demoniac woman at the fortress of Saint Gemini

68. There was a brother who often suffered from a grievous infirmity that was horrible to see; and I know not what name to give it; though some think it was caused by a malignant devil. For often-times he was dashed down and with a terrible look in his eyes he wallowed foaming; sometimes his limbs were contracted, sometimes extended, sometimes they were folded and twisted together, and sometimes they became hard and rigid. Sometimes, tense and rigid all over, with his feet touching his head, he would be lifted up in the air to the height of a man's stature and would then suddenly spring back to the earth. The holy father Francis pitying his grievous sickness went to him and after offering up prayer signed him with the cross and blessed him. And suddenly he

was made whole, and never afterwards suffered from this distressing infirmity.

69. One day when the most blessed father Francis was passing through the diocese of Narni he reached a fortress known as that of Saint Gemini, and while he was there preaching the Gospel of God's kingdom, he with three brethren were entertained by a man who feared and worshipped God and was very well reported of in that town. But his wife, as was known to all the inhabitants of the place, was vexed with a devil; and so her husband besought the blessed Francis for her, trusting that by his merits she might be delivered. But Saint Francis, desiring in his simplicity rather to be had in contempt than through ostentation of sanctity to be uplifted by the favour of this world, altogether refused to do this thing. At length, since God was concerned in the case, he yielded to the prayers of the many who were entreating him. So he called the three brethren who were with him, and setting each one in a corner of the house, he said to them, "Brethren, let us pray to the Lord for this woman, that God may break off from her the devil's yoke, to His praise and glory. Stand we apart (he added) in the corners of the house, that this evil spirit may not be able to escape us or delude us by trying to sneak into the corners." Accordingly, having finished his prayer blessed Francis went in the power of the Spirit to the woman who was being miserably tormented and crying horribly; and he said, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I charge thee, devil, on obedience, to go out of her nor dare to impede her any more". Hardly had he finished speaking when the devil with furious roaring rushed out so swiftly that the holy father thought himself under some illusion, because of the sudden healing of the woman and the prompt obedience of the devil. And forthwith he departed from that place shamefacedly, for God's providence had so wrought in the matter that there might be no place for vainglory on his part. Accordingly, another time when blessed Francis was passing through that same place and brother Elias was with him, the woman as soon as she knew of his coming arose forthwith and ran through the piazza after him begging that he would deign to speak to her; but he would not, knowing that it was the woman out of whom he had once cast a devil by the power of God. But she was kissing his footprints, giving thanks to God and Saint Francis His servant who had delivered her from the hand of death. At length,

urged by the entreaty of brother Elias, the Saint spoke to her, after having been certified by many that it was she that had been sick (as has been said) and had been delivered.

Chapter 26

How at Citta di Castello also he cast out a devil

70. At Citta di Castello also there was a woman possessed by a devil; and when the most blessed father Francis was there she was brought to the house in which he was staying. But she remained outside and began to gnash with her teeth, to make faces and to utter lamentable roarings, (the word used, *barrire*, refers especially to the trumpeting of elephants) after the manner of unclean spirits; and many of the people in that city of both sexes came up and besought Saint Francis for the woman; for that evil spirit had long vexed her by his torments and had troubled them by his roarings. Then the holy father sent to her a brother who was with him, with the intention of finding out whether it really was a devil, or only a woman's deception. When the woman saw the brother she began to mock him, knowing that he was not Saint Francis. The holy father was praying within, and when he had finished his prayer he came out; and then the woman began to tremble and to roll on the ground, unable to stand his power. Saint Francis called her to him and said, "In virtue of obedience I bid thee go out of her, thou unclean spirit," and he straightway left her, doing her no hurt, and departed very full of wrath.

Thanks be to God Almighty, who worketh all in all! However, since we have determined to set forth not miracles (which do not make holiness but show it), but rather the excellence of Saint Francis' life and the flawless pattern of his conversation, we will omit the miracles for their abundance and return to works of eternal salvation.

Chapter 27

Of his serenity and stedfastness of mind and of his preaching before the Lord Pope Honorius; and how he committed himself and the brethren to the Lord Hugo, Bishop of Ostia

71. Francis the man of God had been taught to seek not his own things but those which he might perceive to be specially expedient for the salvation of others; but yet above all things he longed to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Wherefore his chiefest study was to be free from all the things that are in the world, lest the serenity of his mind might even for a moment be troubled by the taint of any dust. He made himself insensible to the din of all outward things; and, gathering up with all his might from every side the outward senses, and keeping the natural impulses in check, occupied himself with God alone. "In the clefts of the rock" he built his nest, and "in a hollow of the wall" was his habitation. (see Canticles 2:14) Surely in fruitful devotion did he roam round lonely (*caelibes*) dwelling-places, and, wholly emptied [of himself], rested long in the Saviour's wounds. Accordingly he often used to choose out solitary places in order that he might therein wholly direct his mind to God; but yet, when he saw that the time was favourable, he was not slothful in attending to business and in applying himself gladly to the salvation of his neighbours. For his safest haven was prayer: not prayer for one moment, not vacant or presumptuous prayer, but long-continued, full of devotion, calm and humble; if he began late he scarce ended with morning. Walking, sitting, eating and drinking, he was intent on prayer. He would often go alone by night to pray in churches which were deserted, or in lonely places, wherein, under the protection of God's grace, he got the better of many fears and distresses of mind. (72) In such places he fought hand to hand with the Devil, who not only smote him inwardly by temptations, but terrified him outwardly through the falling in and overthrow [of buildings].

But God's valiant knight, knowing that his Lord can do all things everywhere, yielded not to terrors, but said in his heart: "Thou canst no more brandish the weapons of thy wickedness against me here, O evil one, than if we were in public, in the sight of all". Truly he was most stedfast, nor did he attend to anything but what was the Lord's. For when, as very often happened, he was preaching God's word among many thousands of people, Francis was as confident as if he had been speaking with an intimate companion. He saw the greatest concourse of people as one man; and to one man he preached most carefully, as if to a multitude. His purity of mind furnished him with confidence in preaching; and without

premeditation he would utter things wonderful and unheard before by all. Sometimes, however, it happened, if he had meditated his sermon beforehand, that when the people were come together he had forgotten what he had thought of, and could not say anything else. Then, without any embarrassment, he confessed to the people that he had thought of many things beforehand of which he could remember nothing at all; and suddenly he would be filled with such eloquence that he moved his hearers to admiration. At other times, however, when he could say nothing, he dismissed the people with his blessing, having by that alone preached to them most effectually.

73. But once, when he had come to Rome on business of the Order, he greatly longed to speak before the Lord Pope Honorius and the venerable Cardinals. When the Lord Hugo, the glorious Bishop of Ostia, who revered the Saint of God with singular affection understood this, he was filled with apprehension as well as joy, admiring the fervour of the holy man, and beholding his simple purity. But trusting in the mercy of the Almighty, which never fails in time of need those who piously wait upon it, he brought Francis into the presence of the Lord Pope and the reverend Cardinals, and Francis, standing before these great princes, after receiving [the Pope's] permission and blessing, boldly began to speak. And such was the fervour of his spirit as he spoke that, unable to contain himself for joy, as he uttered the words with his mouth he moved his feet as if dancing, not as in wantonness, but as glowing with the fire of Divine love; not provoking laughter, but extorting tears of grief. For many of them were pricked at the heart as they wondered at God's grace and the stedfastness of the man. But the venerable Lord Bishop of Ostia was in an agony of suspense, praying to God with all his might that the simplicity of the blessed man might not be despised: for the Saint's glory or disgrace would rebound on him since he had been appointed a father over the Saint's family: (74) for Saint Francis had cleaved to him as a child to his father and an only son to his mother, sleeping and resting securely in the bosom of his clemency. Verily that Cardinal fulfilled the office and did the work of a pastor, though he had left to the holy man the name of pastor. The blessed father provided what was needful, but that happy lord carried the provisions into effect Oh how many (especially at the beginning of the undertaking) were plotting to

overthrow the new planting of the Order! Oh how many were setting themselves to smother the choice vine which the kindly hand of the Lord was newly planting in the world! How many were striving to steal and consume its first and purest fruits! But they were all slain by the sword of that so reverend lord and father and were brought to naught. For he was a stream of eloquence, a wall of the Church, a champion of the truth, and a lover of the humble. Blessed therefore and memorable is that day whereon God's Saint committed himself to so venerable a lord. For once when that lord was holding (as he often did) the office of legate of the Apostolic See in Tuscany, the blessed Francis, who had not as yet many brethren and was intending to visit France, came to Florence where the said bishop was then residing. The two men had not yet been united in special intimacy, but the mere report of the blessed life [of each] had joined them together by mutual affection and charity. (75) And because it was blessed Francis' custom on entering any city or place to go to the bishop or priest, when he heard of the presence of so great a pontiff he presented himself to his clemency with great reverence. And when the lord bishop saw him, he received him with humble devotion - even as he always treated all who professed holy Religion and those especially who bore the noble ensign of blessed poverty and holy simplicity. And forasmuch as he was ever forward to supply the needs of poor men and to handle their business with special care, he diligently inquired the cause of Francis' coming, and heard his purpose most graciously. Then, as he saw him despising earthly things above other men and glowing with that fire which Jesus sent on the earth, from that moment his soul was glued to the soul of Francis, he devoutly besought his prayers, and most gladly offered him his protection in all things; and accordingly he advised Francis not to finish the journey he had begun but to be diligent in the watchful care and keeping of those whom the Lord God had committed to him. But when Saint Francis saw how tender was the disposition of so reverend a lord, how warm his affection, and how effectual his speech, he rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and then, falling at his feet, handed over and committed himself and his brethren to him with devout mind.

Chapter 28

Of the spirit of charity and the compassionate disposition wherewith he glowed toward the poor: and of his treatment of a sheep, and lambs

76. Francis, the poor man, the father of the poor, making himself like unto the poor in all things, used to be distressed to see any one poorer than himself, not because he coveted vain renown, but only from a feeling of sympathy; and though he was content with a very common and rough tunic, he often longed to share it with some poor man. But in order that this richest of poor men, led by his great feeling of tenderness, might (in whatsoever way) help the poor, he would in very cold weather ask the rich of this world to lend him a mantle or furs. When in their devotion they complied with his request even more readily than he had made it, he would say to them: "I will take this from you on the understanding that you do not expect to have it back any more"; and then with joy and exultation he would clothe the first poor man he met with whatever had been given him. He was very much distressed if he saw any poor man harshly spoken to, or if he heard any one utter a curse against any creature.

For instance it happened that a brother had given a sharp answer to a poor man who had asked alms, saying: "See to it, for perhaps thou art a rich man feigning poverty". When Saint Francis, the father of the poor, heard of it he was deeply grieved, and sharply rebuked the brother who had spoken thus, and bade him strip himself before the poor man, kiss his feet and beg his pardon. For he used to say: "He who reviles a poor man does a wrong to Christ, for the poor man bears the noble ensign of Christ Who made Himself poor in this world for us". Often therefore when he found poor people laden with wood or other burdens he would help them by giving the support of his own shoulders, even though very weak, (77) He overflowed with the spirit of charity, pitying not only men who were suffering need, but even the dumb brutes, reptiles, birds, and other creatures with and without sensation. But among all kinds of animals he loved little lambs with a special love and a readier affection, because the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ is, in Holy Scripture, most frequently and aptly illustrated by the simile of a lamb. So too especially he would embrace more fondly and behold more gladly all those things wherein might be found some allegorical similitude of the Son of God. Thus when he was once

journeying through the March of Ancona, and after preaching God's word in that city had set out towards Osimo with Messer Paul whom he had appointed Minister of all the brethren in that province, he found in the fields a shepherd feeding a herd of she-goats and he-goats. Among the multitude of goats there was one little sheep going along in humble fashion and quietly grazing. When Francis saw her he stopped, and, moved in his heart with grief, said to the brother who accompanied him, groaning aloud: "Seest thou not this sheep which is walking so meekly among these she-goats and he-goats? I tell thee that even so our Lord Jesus Christ walked meek and lowly among the Pharisees and chief priests. Wherefore I ask thee, my son, for love of Him, to take pity with me on this little sheep, and let us pay the price and get her out from among these goats." (78) And brother Paul, wondering at his grief, began to grieve with him. But they had nothing but the poor tunics they wore, and as they were anxiously considering how the price might be paid, a merchant who was on a journey came up, and offered the price they desired. They took the sheep, giving thanks to God, and came to Osimo; and went in to the bishop of that city, who received them with great reverence.

The lord bishop, however, wondered both at the sheep which the man of God was leading and at the affection wherewith he was moved toward her. But after Christ's servant had unfolded to him at some length the parable of the sheep, the bishop, pricked at the heart, gave thanks to God for the purity of the man of God. Next day, on leaving the city, Francis considered what he should do with the sheep, and by his companion's advice he handed it over to a monastery of the handmaids of Christ at Saint Severino to be taken care of. The venerable handmaids of Christ received the sheep with joy as a great gift bestowed on them by God, and they kept it carefully for a long time, and wove of the wool a tunic which the) sent to the blessed father Francis at the church of Saint Maria de Portiuncula on the occasion of a Chapter [of the Order]. The Saint of God received it with great reverence and exultation of mind, and embraced and kissed it again and again, inviting all the bystanders to share his joy.

79. Another time when he was passing through that same March and the same brother was gladly accompanying him, he met a man

carrying two lambs, bound and hanging over his shoulders, which he was taking to market to sell. When blessed Francis heard them bleating he was moved with compassion, and came near and touched them, showing pity for them like a mother towards her crying child. And he said to the man: "Why dost thou thus torment my brother lambs by carrying them bound and hanging thus?" The man answered: "I am taking them to market to sell, for I must get a price for them". "What will become of them afterwards?" said the holy man. "The buyers will kill and eat them." "God forbid," answered the Saint. "This must not be; but take the cloak I am wearing for their price, and give the lambs to me." The man gave him the lambs and took the cloak gladly, for it was of much greater value. (Saint Francis had borrowed it that day from a faithful man, to keep off the cold.) When he had received the lambs he carefully considered what he should do with them, and after consulting with his companion gave them back to the man, charging him never to sell them or do them hurt, but to keep them, feed them, and take good care of them.

Chapter 29

Of the love which he bore to all creatures for the Creator's sake. Description of his inner and outer man

80. It were exceeding long, and indeed impossible, to enumerate and collect all the things which the glorious father Francis did and taught while he lived in the flesh. For who could ever express the height of the affection by which he was carried away as concerning all the things that are God's? Who could tell the sweetness which he enjoyed in contemplating in His creatures the wisdom, power and goodness of the Creator? Truly such thoughts often filled him with wondrous and unspeakable joy as he beheld the sun, or raised his eyes to the moon, or gazed on the stars, and the firmament. O simple piety! O pious simplicity! Even towards little worms he glowed with exceeding love, because he had read that word concerning the Saviour: "I am a worm, and no man". Wherefore he used to pick them up in the way and put them in a safe place, that they might not be crushed by the feet of passers-by. What shall I say of other lower creatures, when in winter he would cause honey or the best wine to be provided for bees, that they might not perish

from cold? And he used to extol, to the glory of the Lord, the efficacy of their works and the excellence of their skill with such abundant utterance that many times he would pass a day in praise of them and of the other creatures. For as of old the three children placed in the burning fiery furnace invited all the elements to praise and glorify the Creator of the universe, so this man also, full of the spirit of God, ceased not to glorify, praise, and bless in all the elements and creatures the Creator and Governor of them all. (81) What gladness thinkest thou the beauty of flowers afforded to his mind as he observed the grace of their form and perceived the sweetness of their perfume? For he turned forthwith the eye of consideration to the beauty of that Flower which, brightly coming forth in springtime from the root of Jesse, has by its perfume raised up countless thousands of the dead. And when he came upon a great quantity of flowers he would preach to them and invite them to praise the Lord, just as if they had been gifted with reason. So also cornfields and vineyards, stones, woods, and all the beauties of the field, fountains of waters, all the verdure of gardens, earth and fire, air and wind would he with sincerest purity exhort to the love and willing service of God. In short he called all creatures by the name of brother, and in a surpassing manner, of which other men had no experience, he discerned the hidden things of creation with the eye of the heart, as one who had already escaped into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Now, O good Jesus, in the heavens with the angels he is praising Thee as admirable who when on earth did surely preach Thee to all creatures as lovable. (82) For when he named Thy name, O holy Lord, his emotion passed man's understanding: he was all joy, filled with the purest gladness, and seemed in truth to be a new man and one of the other world. Accordingly wherever he found any writing, Divine or human, whether by the way, in a house, or on the floor, he picked it up most reverently and placed it in some sacred or decent place, in case the name of the Lord or anything pertaining thereto should have been written on it. And one day, when one of the brethren asked him why he so diligently picked up even writings of pagans, and writings in which the name of the Lord was not traced, he gave this answer: u My son, it is because the letters are there whereof the most glorious name of the Lord God is composed. The good, therefore, that is in the writing belongs not to

the pagans nor to any men, but to God alone, of whom is all good." And, what is not less to be wondered at, when he caused any letters of greeting or admonition to be written, he would not suffer a single letter or syllable to be cancelled, even though (as often happened) it were superfluous or misplaced.

83. O how fair, how bright, how glorious did he appear in innocency of life, in simplicity of word, in purity of heart, in the love of God, in charity to the brethren, in ardent obedience, in willing submission, in angelic aspect! He was charming in his manners, of gentle disposition, easy in his talk; most apt in exhortation, most faithful in what he was put in trust with, far-seeing in counsel, effectual in business, gracious in all things; calm in mind, sweet in temper, sober in spirit, uplifted in contemplation, assiduous in prayer, and fervent in all things. He was stedfast in purpose, firm in virtue, persevering in grace, and in all things the same. He was swift to pardon and slow to be angry. He was of ready wit, and had an excellent memory, he was subtle in discussion, circumspect in choice, and simple in all things; stern to himself, tender to others, in all things discreet. He was a man most eloquent, of cheerful countenance, of kindly aspect, free from cowardice, and destitute of arrogance. He was of middle height, inclining to shortness; his head was of moderate size, and round; his face somewhat long and prominent, his forehead smooth and small; his eyes were black, of moderate size, and with a candid look; his hair was dark, his eyebrows straight; his nose symmetrical, thin, and straight; his ears upright, but small; his temples smooth. His words were kindly, [but] fiery and penetrating; his voice was powerful, sweet-toned, clear and sonorous. His teeth were set close together, white, and even; his lips thin and fine, his beard black and rather scanty, his neck slender; his shoulders straight, his arms short, his hands attenuated, with long fingers and nails; his legs slight, his feet small, his skin fine, and his flesh very spare. His clothing was rough, his sleep very brief, his hand most bountiful. And, for that he was most humble, he showed all meekness to all men, adapting himself in profitable fashion to the behaviour of all. Among the saints, holier [than they], among the sinners he was like one of themselves. Help therefore the sinners, most holy father, thou lover of sinners, and deign, we pray thee, of thine abundant mercy, to raise up by thy most glorious advocacy those whom thou

seest miserably lying in the defilement of their misdeeds.

Chapter 30

Of the manger that he made on Christmas day

84. His chief intention, his principal desire and supreme purpose was in and through all things to observe the holy Gospel, and with all watchfulness, all zeal, all the longing of his mind and all the fervour of his heart perfectly to follow the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and tread in His footsteps. He would recall His words with assiduous meditation and dwell on His works with the most piercing consideration. And chiefly did the humility of the Incarnation and the charity of the Passion so occupy his memory that he would scarce ponder over anything else. Therefore that which he did at the fortress called Greccio on the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ in the third year before the day of his glorious decease is to be recorded and dwelt on with reverent memory.

There was in that place a man named John, of good repute, but of better life, whom blessed Francis loved with special affection, because, having been a man of the most noble and honourable position in his town, he had trampled on the nobility of the flesh, and followed after the nobility of the mind. This man did blessed Francis send for (as he was often wont) about fifteen days before the Nativity of the Lord, and said to him: "If thou wilt that we celebrate the present festival of the Lord at Greccio, make haste to go before and diligently prepare what I tell thee. For I would make memorial of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, and in some sort behold with bodily eyes His infant hardships; how He lay in a manger on the hay, with the ox and the ass standing by." When the good and faithful man heard it, he made haste and prepared in the aforesaid place all the things that the Saint had told him of.

85. The day of gladness drew nigh, the time of exultation arrived. The brethren were summoned from many "places"; (a technical term by which the early Franciscan convents were known) the men and women of that town with exulting hearts prepared tapers and torches, as they were able, to illuminate that night which with its radiant Star has illuminated all the days and years. At length the

Saint of God came, and finding all things prepared, beheld them and rejoiced. The manger had been made ready, the hay was brought, the ox and the ass were led in.

There Simplicity was honoured, Poverty exalted, Humility commended; and of Greccio there was made as it were a new Bethlehem. The night was lit up as the day, and was delightsome to men and beasts. The people came, and at the new Mystery rejoiced with new rejoicings. The woodland rang with voices, the rocks made answer to the jubilant throng. The brethren sang, yielding due praises to the Lord, and all that night resounded with jubilation. The Saint of God stood before the manger, full of sighs, overcome with tenderness and filled with wondrous joy. The solemnities of Mass were celebrated over the manger, and the priest enjoyed a new consolation. (86) The Saint of God was vested with Levitical ornaments, for he was a Levite, and with sonorous voice chanted the holy Gospel - an earnest, sweet, clear and loud-sounding voice, inviting all to the highest rewards. Then he preached to the people who stood around, and uttered mellifluous words concerning the birth of the poor King and the little town of Bethlehem. - (And often, when he would name Christ Jesus, aglow with exceeding love he would call Him the Child of Bethlehem, and, uttering the word "Bethlehem" in the manner of a sheep bleating, he filled his mouth with the sound, but even more his whole self with the sweet affection. Moreover, in naming "the Child of Bethlehem" or "Jesus° he would, as it were, lick his lips, relishing with happy palate, and swallowing the sweetness of that word.) - There the gifts of the Almighty were multiplied, and a vision of wondrous efficacy was seen by a certain man; for in the manger he saw a little child lying lifeless, to whom the Saint of God seemed to draw near and (as it were) to rouse the child from the lethargy of sleep. Nor was this vision incongruous; for the child Jesus had been given over to forgetfulness in the hearts of many in whom, by the working of His Grace, He was raised up again through His servant Francis and imprinted on a diligent memory.

At length the solemn vigil was ended, and each one returned with joy to his own place.

87. The hay placed in the manger was kept, in order that thereby

the Lord might save beasts of burden and other animals, even as He multiplied His holy mercy. And verily so it came to pass, for many animals in the region round about which had divers diseases were freed from their sicknesses by eating of that hay. Nay more, women in long and grievous labour were safely delivered by putting some of the hay on themselves, and a crowd of persons of either sex suffering from various ailments gained their long-wished-for health at that same place. Finally the place of the manger was hallowed as a temple to the Lord; and in honour of the most blessed father Francis, over the manger an altar was reared and a church dedicated, to the end that where beasts had once eaten fodder of hay, men might thenceforth for the healing of soul and body eat the flesh of the spotless and undefiled Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who in highest and unspeakable charity gave Himself for us, Who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, God eternally glorious, world without end. Amen, Alleluia, Alleluia.

HERE ENDS THE FIRST PART OF THE LIFE AND ACTS OF BLESSED FRANCIS

Part II - Concerning the Life of Our Most Blessed Father Francis During [the last] Two Years Only, and Concerning His Happy Decease

Chapter 1

88. In the former treatise, which (by the Saviour's grace) we have brought to a fitting conclusion, we have written a narrative, such as it is, of the life and acts of our most blessed father Francis down to the eighteenth year of his conversion. But his remaining exploits, beginning from the last year but one of his life, according as we have been able to learn them rightly, we will briefly add to this work: and at present we intend to note down those things alone which suggest themselves as the most necessary, so that they who wish to say more may still be able to find something to add.

In the 1226th year of our Lord's Incarnation, in the fourteenth Indiction, on Sunday the fourth day of October, in the city of Assisi, of which he was a native, at Saint Maria de Portiuncula, where he first planted the Order of Lesser Brethren, our most blessed father Francis, having fulfilled twenty years from the time when he had perfectly cleaved to Christ, following the life and footsteps of the Apostles, came forth from the prison of the flesh and took his happy flight to the abode of the heavenly spirits, perfecting what he had begun. His hallowed and holy body was placed and honourably buried with hymns and praises in that city, where by many miracles it shines to the glory of the Almighty.

89. Now when this man was in the first flower of his youth he was little or not at all instructed in the way of God and in the knowledge of Him and remained for no short time in his natural simplicity and in the heat of vice; but he was changed by the right hand of the Highest and justified from sin, and by the grace and power of the Most High was filled with Divine wisdom above all who were found in his own time. For whereas the Gospel teaching had everywhere proved to a great extent ineffectual generally

(though not in particular instances), this man was sent by God in order that after the Apostles' example he might bear witness to the truth throughout the whole world. And so it came to pass that his teaching showed most plainly that all the wisdom of the world is foolish; and turned it in a short time, under the guidance of Christ, by the foolishness of preaching to the true wisdom of God. For in this latest time this new evangelist, like one of the rivers of Paradise, diffused the streams of the Gospel over all the earth with tender watering, and preached in deed the way of the Son of God, and the teaching of the Truth. Through him accordingly unlooked-for gladness and holy renovation filled the world, and a shoot of ancient religion brought a sudden reviving to long-standing decrepitude. A new spirit was given in the hearts of the elect, and saving unction was poured forth among them when, like one of the luminaries of heaven, Christ's servant and Saint shone from on high with a new rite and new prodigies. Through him the ancient miracles were renewed, while in the wilderness of this world there was planted by a new method but after ancient custom a fruitful vine bearing sweet flowers, fragrant with holy virtues and stretching out everywhere the tendrils of a hallowed Religion.

90. Now though he was "a man of like passions with ourselves," he was not content to observe the common precepts, but overflowing with most fervent charity he took the way of entire perfection; he laid hold on the sum of perfect holiness, and saw every end fully attained. And so every order, age and sex finds in him plain instructions of salutary teaching and finds also eminent examples of holy works. If there be any who purpose to set their hand to arduous deeds and strive in emulation after the better unctions of the more excellent way, let them look into the mirror of his life and they shall learn all perfection. If any again fearing the steep climb to the top of the mountain betake them to a lowlier and easier course, they shall find, even at this level, fitting admonitions with him. And finally if any seek for signs and miracles let them interrogate his holiness and they shall get what they demand. And indeed the glorious life of this man sheds a clearer light on the perfection of earlier saints; the Passion of Jesus Christ proves this and His Cross makes it most fully manifest. Verity our venerable father was signed in five parts of his body with the token of the Cross and Passion, as if he had hung on the Cross with the Son of

God. This sacrament is a great thing and makes known the majesty of love's prerogative; but therein a secret counsel lies hid, and a reverend mystery is covered which we believe to be known to God only and to have been in part disclosed by the Saint himself to a certain person. Wherefore it is not expedient to attempt much in praise of him whose praise is from Him who is the Praise, the Source, the Honour of all, the Most Mighty, giving rewards of light. Let us therefore return to our history, blessing the holy, true and glorious God.

Chapter 2

Of blessed Francis' greatest desire; and how in the opening of a book he understood the Lord's will concerning him

91. At a certain time the blessed and venerable father Francis, forsaking the crowds of lay-folk who were daily flocking together with the utmost devotion to see and hear him, went to a secret place of rest and solitude, desiring there to wait on God, and to wipe off any dust that might have stuck to him in his intercourse with men. His custom was to apportion the time allotted to him for the earning of grace, and, as he saw fit, to devote one part of it to the profit of his neighbour, and to spend the other in the blessed retirement of contemplation. He took with him therefore a very few companions, to whom his holy conversation was better known than to the rest, that they might protect him from being disturbed by the incursions of men, and might in all things respect and guard his repose. And after he had remained some while there and by continual prayer and frequent contemplation had in an unspeakable manner attained to intimacy with God, he longed to know what was or might be most acceptable to the Eternal King in and concerning himself. Most carefully did he search out and most tenderly did he long to know in what manner, by what way or by what desire he might most perfectly cleave to the Lord God, in accordance with the counsel and good pleasure of His will. This was ever his highest philosophy: with this supreme desire he ever burned so long as he lived: to seek out from simple and wise, from perfect and imperfect, how he might apprehend the way of truth and accomplish the highest purpose. (92) For whereas he was the most perfect of the perfect he disclaimed perfection and deemed himself altogether

imperfect. For he had tasted and seen how sweet, how pleasing, how good the God of Israel is to those who are upright of heart and seek Him in pure simplicity and true purity; and the sweetness and delight instilled - such sweetness and delight as are most rarely vouchsafed to the rarest men - which he had felt wafted to him from on high, compelled him wholly to stand aloof from himself; and being filled with such rapture he longed by all means to pass over wholly thither where, leaving himself, he had already in part gone before. The man was ready (having the Spirit of God) to suffer every distress of mind and to endure every bodily suffering if his wish might at length be granted, namely, that his heavenly Father's will should mercifully be accomplished in him. One day therefore he came before the sacred altar that had been erected in the hermitage where he abode, took a volume wherein the sacred Gospels were written and reverently placed it on the altar. Then prostrate in prayer to God (not less in heart than in body) he asked with humble supplication that the gracious God, "the father of mercies and God of all comfort," would be pleased to show him His will. And that he might have strength perfectly to accomplish that which in simplicity and devotion he had begun long before, he humbly prayed that on his first opening of the book it might be pointed out what would be fittest for him to do. (For he was being guided by the spirit of holy and most perfect men, of whom we read that they did something of the like nature with pious devotion in their longing for holiness.) (93) Then, rising from prayer, with contrite heart and in the spirit of humility, and fortifying himself with the sign of the holy cross, he took the book from the altar and opened it with reverence and awe. And it came to pass that when he had opened the book the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ first met his eye, and therein alone the passage announcing that He would suffer tribulation. But to avoid any suspicion that this might have happened by chance, he opened the book a second and a third time and found the same or a similar passage written. Then the man, full of the Spirit of God, understood that it behoved him through much anguish and much warfare to enter into the Kingdom of God. But the valiant knight is not dismayed at wars that are bursting upon him, nor is he shaken in mind who is about to fight the Lord's battles in the camp of this world. The man who had toiled long beyond the measure of human strength without yielding even to himself had no fear of falling before the foe. Truly he was

most fervent, and if he had in the past ages a companion in purpose, no one was ever found superior to him in desire. It was even easier for him to work perfection than to talk about it, for he always applied himself with effectual zeal and effort not to words (which are not constituents of good, but evidences of it) but to holy deeds. And so he stood unshaken and glad and sang songs of gladness in his heart to himself and to God. Therefore he was held worthy of a greater revelation who thus rejoiced over a lesser; and "he that is faithful in little is set over many things".

Chapter 3

Of the vision of a man having the likeness of a seraph crucified

94. While he dwelt in the hermitage which, from the place in which it is situate, is called Alverna, two years before he gave back his soul to Heaven, he saw in a vision of God a man like a seraph having six wings, standing over him with hands outstretched and feet joined together, fixed to a cross. Two wings were raised above his head, two were spread out for flight, and two veiled the whole body. Now, when the blessed servant of the Most High saw this, he was filled with exceeding great wonder, but he could not understand what this vision might mean. Yet he rejoiced greatly and was filled with vehement delight at the benign and gracious look wherewith he saw that he was regarded by the seraph, whose beauty far exceeded all estimation; but the crucifixion, and the bitterness of the seraph's suffering smote him altogether with fear. Thus he arose, so to speak, sorrowful and glad; and joy and grief alternated in him. He anxiously pondered what this vision might portend, and his spirit laboured sore to come at the understanding of it. And while he continued without any clear perception of its meaning, and the strangeness of the vision was perplexing his heart, marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, such as he had seen a little while before in the Man crucified who had stood over him.

95. His hands and feet seemed pierced in the midst by nails, the heads of the nails appearing in the inner part of the hands and in the upper part of the feet, and their points over against them. Now those marks were round in the inner side of the hands and

elongated on the outer side, and certain small pieces of flesh were seen like the ends of nails bent and driven back, projecting from the rest of the flesh. So also the marks of nails were imprinted in his feet, and raised above the rest of the flesh. Moreover his right side, as it had been pierced by a lance, was overlaid with a scar, and often shed forth blood, so that his tunic and drawers were many times sprinkled with the sacred blood. Alas! how few were found worthy to see the sacred wound in his side while the crucified servant of the crucified Lord was yet alive! But happy was Elias who was found worthy to see it somehow while the Saint was living; and not less happy Rufino who touched it with his own hands. For once, when brother Rufino had put his hand into the most holy man's bosom that he might scratch him, his hand (as it often chances) slipped down to Francis' right side, and he happened to touch that precious scar, at which touch the Saint of God was not a little distressed, and, pushing the hand away, he cried to the Lord that He might forgive him (Rufino). For he concealed the stigmata most diligently from strangers, and from those about him he hid them so carefully that even the brethren at his side and his most devoted followers were for a long time unaware of them. (96) And though the servant and friend of the Most High saw himself adorned with such and so many of these pearls (as with most precious jewels), and distinguished in wondrous fashion beyond the glory and honour of all men, he was not vain in his heart, nor did he seek to gratify [the curiosity] of any concerning this matter from lust of vainglory, but, that man's favour might not rob him of the grace bestowed on him he exerted himself in every way he could to hide it. For his custom was to reveal his chiefest secret to few or none; fearing that if he revealed it to any, these persons treating his confidence as a mark of special affection would disclose it to others (as favourites are wont to do,) and that thereby he would suffer some loss in the grace that had been given him. Accordingly he ever had in his heart and often on his lips that saying of the Prophet, "I have hidden Thy words in my heart that I should not sin against Thee". And whenever any lay-people came to him and he wished to abstain from talking with them, he had given this token to the brethren and sons who abode with him that when he should recite the aforesaid verse they were at once with all courtesy to dismiss the visitors. For he had found by experience that it is a very evil thing to impart all things to everybody, and he knew that no one

can be spiritual whose secret perfections are not more and greater than those which appear outwardly and may in consequence of that appearance give rise to different judgments among men. For he had found some who agreed with him outwardly and disagreed with him inwardly, applauding him to his face and mocking him behind his back; who got credit for themselves and made him somewhat mistrustful of the upright. For wickedness often strives to blacken purity; and by reason of the falsehood which is familiar to the many the truth spoken by the few is not believed.

Chapter 4

Of blessed Francis' fervour: and of the infirmity of his eyes

97. During this same period his body began to be oppressed with various sicknesses, more grievous than before: for he suffered frequent infirmities, being one who during many years past had perfectly chastised his body and brought it into subjection. For, for the space of eighteen years, then fulfilled, his flesh had had little or no rest, travelling through many and very extensive regions that the ready, devoted, fervent spirit which dwelt within might scatter everywhere the seeds of God's word. He filled all the earth with Christ's Gospel, so that often in one day he would make the circuit of four or five villages or even towns preaching to every one the Gospel of the Kingdom of God: and, edifying his hearers not less by his example than by his words, he had made a tongue of his whole body. For in him the flesh was so much in concord with the spirit and so obedient to it that whilst the spirit was striving to compass all sanctity, the flesh not only did not resist but was forward to anticipate according as it is written, "My soul hath thirsted for Thee, in what manifold wise my flesh also!" For persistence in subjection had made it voluntary; and it was by the daily bending down of himself that he had attained so high a position in virtue: for custom often becomes nature. (98) But since as according to Nature's laws and the manner of man's condition, the outward man must needs perish from day to day (though the inward be renewed) that most precious vessel wherein was hidden a heavenly treasure, began on all sides to be shattered and to suffer the loss of all its strength. But forasmuch as "when a man is completed then he shall begin, and when he shall end then he shall work," (Ecclesiasticus 18:6) amid

the weakness of the flesh, his spirit became even more active than before. So earnestly was his affection set on the salvation of souls, and such was his thirst for his neighbour's advantage, that though he could no longer walk he went round the country riding on an ass. The brethren often warned him with the most urgent entreaties that he should in some sort restore his sick and greatly enfeebled body by the aid of physicians. But he, with that noble spirit of his fixed on heaven, and longing only to be dissolved and to be with Christ, altogether refused to do it. Then, for that he had not yet fulfilled those sufferings of Christ which were still lacking in his flesh, even though he bore Christ's stigmata in his body, there came upon him a grievous infirmity of the eyes, according as God multiplied His mercy on him. And as that infirmity increased from day to day and seemed daily to be aggravated by neglect, at length, brother Elias, whom he had chosen for himself in place of a mother, and had made the father of the other brethren, urged him not to shrink from medicine, but to receive it in the name of the Son of God by whom it had been created, even as it is written: "The Most High hath created medicine out of the earth, and the wise man will not shrink from it". Then the holy father acquiesced, and humbly complied with the words of his admonisher.

Chapter 5

How he was received at Rieti by the Lord Hugo, Bishop of Ostia; and how the Saint proclaimed that that bishop would be bishop of all the world

99. Now it came to pass that when many were coming to help him with their medicines without any remedy being found, he went to the city of Rieti where dwelt a man said to be very skilful in the cure of that disease. And when he got there he was most kindly and honourably received by the whole Roman Court which was then residing in that same city, but with especial devotion by the Lord Hugo, Bishop of Ostia, who far outshone the rest in virtuous behaviour and holiness of life. By the will and consent of the Lord Pope Honorius Blessed Francis had chosen this man as father and lord over the whole Religion and Order of his brethren because blessed Poverty was very pleasing to him and he held holy Simplicity in the greatest reverence. That lord conformed himself to

the behaviour of the brethren, and in his longing for holiness was simple with the simple, humble with the humble and a poor man with the poor. He was a Brother among the Brethren, among the Lesser Least, and strove so far as might be to bear himself in life and conduct just like one of the rest. He was watchful to plant the holy Religion everywhere? and the illustrious report of his still more illustrious life greatly enlarged the Order in distant parts. The Lord gave him a learned tongue whereby he confounded the adversaries of the truth, refuted the enemies of the Cross of Christ, brought back wanderers to the way, made peace between those who were in discord, and bound together those who were in concord by a stronger bond of charity. He was a "burning and a shining lamp" in the Church of God and a "chosen arrow" (John 5:35; Isaiah 49:2) prepared in due season, (100) O how often would he put off his costly garments, and arrayed in mean ones, going barefoot like one of the brethren, would he entreat for the things that make for peace! And this he was careful to do between a man and his neighbour as often as was meet; between God and man, always. Wherefore God chose him not long after to be Pastor in His holy Church Universal and "lifted up his head among the tribes of the people". And that it may be known that this election was inspired by God and effected by the will of Christ Jesus, the blessed father Francis long before predicted it by words and marked it by a sign. For when by the operation of God's grace the Order and Religion of the brethren was beginning to be much enlarged and, like a cedar in the Paradise of God, was lifting its top (that is, its holy merit) to heaven, and even as a choice vine was stretching its sacred branches over the breadth of the earth, Saint Francis came to the Lord Pope Honorius who was then set over the Church of Rome and humbly begged him to appoint the Lord Hugo, Bishop of Ostia, father and lord of him and his brethren. The Lord Pope granted the Saint's prayer and in gracious compliance therewith made over to the bishop his own authority over the Order of the Brethren, which the bishop received with reverence and devotion, and, like a faithful and wise servant set over the Lord's household he strove by all means to minister the food of eternal life in due season to those committed to his charge. Wherefore the holy father submitted himself to him in all ways and revered him with wondrous and respectful affection. He was led by the Spirit of God wherewith he was filled and therefore beheld long before what was afterwards to

be accomplished in the sight of all as he had foreseen it. For whenever he would write to the Bishop of Ostia, being urged by business of his religious family, or rather constrained by the charity of Christ wherewith he burned towards him, he would by no means allow him in his letters to be called "Bishop of Ostia" or "of Velletri" according to the customary greeting employed by others, but after fixing on his subject he would begin "To the right reverend father (or lord) Hugo, bishop of the whole world". And often he would greet him with unheard-of blessings; and, though he were a son in devout submission, yet at the Spirit's prompting he would sometimes comfort him with fatherly intercourse, that he might "confirm upon him the blessings of the fathers, until the desire of the eternal hills should come". (Genesis 49:26) (101) The said lord for his part burned with exceeding love toward the holy man and therefore whatever the blessed man said or did pleased him, and he was often deeply stirred by the mere sight of him. He himself bears witness that however disturbed or vexed he might be, on seeing Saint Francis and talking with him all mental clouds were dispersed, serenity returned, melancholy was put to flight and joy breathed on him from above. He ministered to Saint Francis as a servant to his lord; and as often as he saw him paid him reverence as to an apostle of Christ; and bowing down outwardly and inwardly would often kiss his hands with his consecrated mouth. He sought with watchful and devoted care how the blessed father might recover the former soundness of his eyes, knowing him to be a holy man and a just, and exceedingly necessary and profitable to the Church of God. He had compassion on the whole congregation of the brethren concerning him, and in the father pitied the sons. He warned the holy father therefore to take care of himself and not to cast away the things necessary for his infirmity, lest the neglect of these things should be accounted sinful rather than meritorious. And Saint Francis humbly attended to what so reverend a lord and so dear a father told him, and thenceforth took the measures necessary for his cure with greater care and confidence. But meantime the disease had so much increased that for its healing in any degree it required the most skilled advice and demanded the most severe treatment. And so they cauterised his head in several places, cut open his veins, put on plasters and applied eye-washes, but he made no progress and was almost continuously getting worse.

Chapter 6

Of the behaviour of the brethren who waited on Saint Francis; and how he was disposing himself to live

102. These things he bore for about two years in all patience and meekness, giving thanks in everything to God. But to the end that he might the more freely direct his intention to God, and in frequent ecstasy haunt the purlieus of the blissful mansions of heaven, and present himself on high in the richness of grace before the most gracious and serene Lord of all, he had entrusted the care of himself to certain brethren whom he loved much, and deservedly. Now these were men of virtue, devoted to God, pleasing to the Saints, acceptable to men, on whom (as a house on four pillars) the blessed father Francis leaned. Their names I now suppress, to spare the shamefastness which is a very familiar friend to them, spiritual men as they are. (They were Leo, Angelo, Rufino and Masseo.) For shamefastness is the ornament of every age, the witness to innocence, the token of a modest mind, the rod of discipline, the special glory of the conscience, the guardian of reputation, and the badge of all seemliness. This virtue had adorned these brethren and made them lovable, and kind to men; but while this grace was common to all, each one was beautified by his own peculiar virtue. The first was of eminent discretion, the second of singular patience, the third of glorious simplicity, and the fourth was as gentle in disposition as he was powerful in bodily strength. And these with all watchfulness, with all zeal, and all their will strove to secure their blessed father's peace of mind, and cared for his bodily sickness shunning no distress nor toil that they might give themselves wholly to the Saint's service.

103. But though the glorious father was now complete in grace before God, and shone among the men of this world by his holy deeds, still he was ever thinking how he might set his hand to enterprises of greater perfection, and (like a skilled knight in God's camp) challenge the foe and kindle new wars. He purposed, under Christ his captain, to do great things, and even while his limbs were failing and his body as good as dead, he hoped to triumph over the foe in a fresh contest; for true virtue knows no limit of time, the expectation of the reward being eternal. Therefore he burned with a

great desire to return to the beginnings of humility, and rejoicing in hope by reason of boundless love he thought to bring back his body - though now-reduced to such extremity - to its former subjection. He was wholly cutting off every care that might be a hindrance to him and was completely hushing the din of all anxieties, and even while he was of necessity moderating the former rigour on account of his infirmity, he would say, "Let us begin, brethren, to serve the Lord God, for hitherto we have profited little or nothing". He counted not himself as yet to have apprehended, and remaining indefatigable in his purpose to attain new sanctity, ever hoped that he might make a beginning. He wished once more to return to the service of lepers, and to be held in contempt as he had once been. He purposed to fly from intercourse with men, and betake himself to the remotest places, that so, having put off all care and laid aside anxiety for others, the wall of the flesh (while he was still in the body) might alone separate him from God. (104) For he saw many running after orifices of government whose temerity he hated, and whom he was striving to recall from such pestilence by his example. And he used to say that it was good and acceptable before God to have charge of others, and that those ought to undertake the care of souls who should seek naught therein of their own, but should always give heed to the will of God in all things - such men as should put nothing before their own salvation; should attend, not to the applause, but to the profit of those put under them, seeking not pomp in the sight of men, but glory before God; such men as should not strive after office, but fear it; such men as should not be puffed up by it when they got it, but humbled, and when it was taken away from them should not be cast down, but exalted. But especially at that time, when wickedness had grown to such excess, and iniquity abounded, he pronounced that it was dangerous to rule and more profitable to be ruled. He grieved that some had "left their first works" and had forgotten their old simplicity in new inventions; and accordingly he lamented that they who were once intent with their whole desire on higher things had descended to things base and worthless, and had left the true joys to range and wander in frivolity and emptiness over the field of a vacuous liberty. Therefore he besought the Divine clemency for the deliverance of his children, and prayed most earnestly that they might be kept in the grace given them.

Chapter 7

How he came from Siena to Assisi: of the Church of Santa Maria in Portiuncula: and of the blessing of the brethren

105. Now in the sixth month before the day of his death, while he was at Siena for the treatment of the infirmity of his eyes, he began grievously to sicken in all the rest of his body; and the stomach being weakened through long standing disease and the disordered state of the liver, he vomited much blood, so that he seemed to be drawing nigh to death. On hearing of this, brother Elias came to him from a distance with the utmost haste; and when he arrived the holy father recovered so much that he left Siena and came with Elias to Cella di Cortona. He came there and remained there some time during which his belly, his legs and his feet swelled, and his stomach became more and more deranged so that he could scarcely take any food. Then he asked brother Elias that he would have him brought to Assisi. The good son did what the kind father wished, prepared all things and brought him to the longed-for place. The city rejoiced over the arrival of the blessed father, and the mouths of all the people praised God, for the whole multitude hoped that the holy man might soon die; (in order that they might keep his remains) and this was the matter of their so great exultation. And so it came to pass by the will of God, namely, that his holy soul, when released from the body, passed to the Kingdom of Heaven from the place where, while still abiding in the flesh, the knowledge of heavenly things had been first vouchsafed to him, and the saving unction poured upon him. (106) For though he knew that the Kingdom of Heaven has been set up in every place on earth, and believed that in every place the Divine grace is bestowed on God's elect, he had found by experience that the "place" of the Church of Saint Maria in Portiuncula was filled with more fruitful grace, and frequented by the visitation of heavenly spirits. Therefore he often used to say to the brethren: "See, my sons, that ye never desert this place. If you are driven out by one way, come back by another: for this place is truly holy, and the abode of God. Here, when we were few the Most High increased us; here He enlightened the hearts of His poor men by the light of His wisdom; here He kindled our wills by the fire of His love; here he who shall pray with devout heart shall have what he asks, and he who shall offend shall be more

heavily punished. Wherefore, my sons, deem the place of God's habitation worthy of all honour, and there with all your heart, with the voice of exultation and praise, give thanks to God."

107. Meanwhile, as his sickness increased, all his bodily force failed, and being deprived of all strength, he could not move at all. And when one of the brethren asked him which he would rather bear, this sickness, so lingering and so long, or to undergo from an executioner any martyrdom, however terrible, his answer was: "That, my son, ever has been and is dearest, sweetest, and most acceptable to me which it most pleases the Lord my God to do in me and with me, to Whose will I ever desire to be found conformable and obedient in all things. But in exchange for any kind of martyrdom it would be more distressing to me to bear this sickness, were it but for three days; and I do not say this having regard to the reward, but only to the distress which the suffering causes." O martyr, and once again martyr, who with laughter and rejoicing most gladly bore that which to all was most bitter and grievous to behold!

Truly not one of his members was left free from extreme suffering, and as the natural heat was being gradually lost, he was daily drawing near the end. The doctors were amazed and the brethren wondered how the spirit could live in flesh so dead, when the skin alone (the flesh having perished) stuck to the bones.

108. Now when he saw that his last day was at hand (which had also been indicated to him two years before by Divine revelation), he called to him the brethren whom he would, and, as it was given him from above he blessed each one even as of old the patriarch Jacob blessed his sons, nay rather like a second Moses about to go up to the mountain which God had appointed him, he enlarged the children of Israel with blessings. And as brother Elias was sitting on his left hand and his other sons were sitting around, he crossed his hands, laid his right hand on Elias' head and said (he being deprived of the light and use of his outward eyes), "On whom am I holding my right hand?" "On brother Elias," was the answer. "And that is my wish," said he, adding: "I bless thee, my son, in and through all things, and as the Most High hath in thy hands increased my brethren and sons, so also, over thee and in thee do I

bless them all. God, the King of all, bless thee in heaven and in earth. I bless thee as I can, and more than I can, and what I cannot may He who can do all things do in thee. God remember thy work and toil, and may a share be reserved for thee in the recompense of the just. Mayest thou find every blessing thou desirest, and may that which thou dost worthily ask be fulfilled. Fare ye well all ye my sons in the fear of God and remain in Him always, for a great trial is coming upon you and tribulation draweth nigh. Happy are they who shall persevere in the things they have begun, for the scandals that are to be shall separate some from them. But I am hastening to the Lord, and am now confidently going to my God, whom in my spirit I have served with devotion." He was at that time dwelling in the palace of the Bishop of Assisi; and therefore he asked the brethren to carry him with all speed to the "place" of Saint Maria de Portiuncula; for he wished to give back his soul to God there, where (as has been said) he first knew the way of the truth perfectly.

Chapter 8

What he did and said at the time of his happy decease

109. The space of twenty years since his conversion was now accomplished, according to that which had been made known to him by the Divine will: for at a certain time when the blessed father and brother Elias were dwelling at Foligno, one night when they were asleep a certain priest clothed in white, of very great age and venerable appearance, stood by brother Elias and said: "Arise, brother, and tell brother Francis that eighteen years are fulfilled since he renounced the world and clave to Christ, that he shall remain in this life for two years only from this time and then the Lord will call him to Himself and he shall enter on the way of all flesh". And so it came to pass that the word of the Lord long foretold was fulfilled at the appointed time.

So after he had rested for a few days in the place he had so greatly longed for, and knew that the time of death was imminent, he called to him two brethren, and his specially loved sons and bade them in exultation of spirit sing with a loud voice praises to the Lord concerning death which was near, or rather life which was so

close at hand; while himself, as he was able, broke into that Psalm of David, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord I made supplication". But a certain brother among the company whom the Saint loved with very great affection and who was in great anxiety on behalf of all the brethren said to him when he saw these things and knew that his end was approaching, "Ah, kind father! thy children remain fatherless now, and are being bereft of the true light of their eyes! Remember then the orphans thou art leaving, forgive them all their faults and rejoice them all both present and absent with thy holy blessing!" "See, my son," answered the Saint, "God is calling me, I remit all the offences and faults of my brethren as well absent as present, and so far as I may, I absolve them: do thou proclaim this to them and bless them all for me."

110. Finally he ordered the codex of the Gospels to be brought and asked to have the passage from the Gospel according to John read to him beginning at the words "Six days (sic) before the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world unto the Father". Now the attendant had purposed to read this Gospel to him before he was bidden to do so, and furthermore the book opened first at that place, though the volume (*Bibliotheca*, i.e., the volume of the Holy Scriptures) out of which that Gospel had to be read was filled throughout with writing.

Then, for that he was about to become dust and ashes, he bade that he should be laid on sack-cloth and sprinkled with ashes. All the brethren (whose father and leader he was) came together, and, as they stood reverently by and awaited his blessed departure and happy consummation, his most holy soul was released from the flesh and absorbed into the abyss of light, and his body fell asleep in the Lord . But one of his brethren and disciples, a man of no small fame, whose name I think it right to suppress now because while he lives in the flesh he chooses not to glory in such an announcement, saw the soul of the most holy father ascending over many waters in a straight course to heaven: and his soul was as it were a star having in some sort the bigness of the moon and possessing somewhat of the brightness of the sun, and borne up by a little white cloud, (111) Wherefore it pleases me to cry out thus concerning him: "O how glorious is this Saint whose soul a disciple

saw ascending into heaven: 'fair as the moon, precious as the sun,' (Canticles 6:9) most gloriously did he glow as he ascended on a white cloud! O thou true lamp of the world, shining in Christ's Church more brightly than the sun, lo! now thou hast withdrawn the beams of thy light, and, departing to that shining country, hast exchanged the company of us miserable beings for that of angels and saints! O glorious nursing-father of singular renown, put not off from thee the care of thy children though thou have now put off flesh like unto theirs! Thou knowest, yea thou knowest, in what great straits thou hast left those whose countless toils and frequent distresses thy happy presence alone did at all times tenderly relieve! O most holy father, truly merciful, who wast ever ready in kindness to have mercy on thy sinful children and to forgive them! Thee therefore we bless, worthy father whom the Most High did bless Who is for ever God blessed above all. Amen."

Chapter 9

Of the brethren's lamentation and of their joy when they beheld him bearing the signs of the Cross: and of the Seraph's wings

112. Many people therefore flocked together praising God and saying: "Praised and blessed be thou, O Lord our God, who hast entrusted to us, unworthy as we are, so precious a deposit: praise and glory be to Thee, ineffable Trinity." The whole city of Assisi rushed in throngs, and all that region made haste to see the great things of God which the Lord of Majesty had gloriously shown in His holy servant. Each one, as his heart's joy prompted him, sang an hymn of gladness, and all blessed the Saviour's omnipotence for the fulfilment of their desire. But the sons, bereft of such a father, lamented and showed the dutiful affection of their hearts by tears and sighs. But an unheard-of joy tempered their sadness, and the novelty of a miracle turned their minds to exceeding amazement. Grief was converted into singing and weeping into jubilation. For never had they heard or read in Scriptures of a thing which was now displayed before their eyes; and indeed they could scarce have been persuaded of it had it not been proved by testimony so manifest. There appeared in him in fact the form of the Cross and Passion of the spotless Lamb Who washed away the sins of the world, while he seemed as though lately taken down from the

Cross, having his hands and feet pierced by nails, and his right side as though wounded by a lance. And they beheld his flesh which had been dark before glittering with exceeding whiteness and promising by its beauty the reward of a blessed resurrection. Finally they saw his face like the face of an angel, as if he were alive and not dead, while his other members had become soft and pliant like those of an innocent child. (113) His sinews were not contracted as those of the dead are wont to be, his skin was not hardened, his limbs were not stiffened, but turned this way and that as they were placed. And while he shone with such wondrous beauty in the sight of all, and his flesh had become still more radiant, it was wonderful to see amid his hands and feet not the prints of the nails but the nails themselves formed out of his flesh and retaining the blackness of iron, and his right side reddened with blood. The signs of martyrdom did not fill the minds of the beholders with horror but added much comeliness and grace, even as little black stones in a white pavement are wont to do. His brethren and sons hastened to the sight and wept together as they kissed the hands and feet of the tender father who was leaving them, and his right side also in whose wound a solemn memorial was enacting of Him who, shedding forth blood and water together from that same part, reconciled the world to the Father. Any one among the people who was admitted, not to kiss but only to see the sacred stigmata of Jesus Christ which Saint Francis bore in his body deemed that the greatest of gifts was bestowed upon him. For who at that sight would give himself over to weeping and not rather to joy? and if he wept would not weep for joy rather than from grief? Whose breast so hard but it would be moved to groaning? Whose heart so stony but it would be cleft by compunction, kindled to Divine love, armed with a good will? Who so dull, so insensible as not to perceive in manifest truth that as that Saint was honoured by so unparalleled a gift on earth so he is magnified by glory unspeakable in heaven?

114. O unparalleled gift, and token of a prerogative of love, that a knight should be decked with the same glorious arms that befit the King alone in their surpassing dignity! O miracle worthy of eternal memory, O memorable sacrament worthy of ceaseless awe and wonder, which by seeing faith (*Oculata fide*. Al. *occulta*, *occultata* (hidden faith)) represents that mystery wherein the blood of the spotless Lamb streaming plenteously through five outlets has

washed away the sins of the world! O sublime splendour of the life-giving Cross which quickens the dead, whose burden presses so gently and causes so sweet a smart that in it the dead flesh lives and the feeble spirit is strengthened! He loved thee much, whom thou didst so gloriously adorn! Glory and blessing be to the only wise God who reneweth signs and changeth wonders that He may comfort the minds of the weak by new revelations and that by a wonderful work in the region of the visible their hearts may be caught up into love of the invisible! O wondrous and lovable contrivance of God whereby (that no suspicion might arise concerning the newness of the miracle) He in His mercy first displayed in a celestial being that which ere long He was about to do in one dwelling on earth! And indeed the true Father of mercies willed to make known of how great a reward he is worthy who shall strive to love Him with all his heart - a station namely in the highest rank of super-celestial spirits and the nearest to Himself. And this reward we can undoubtedly attain if like the Seraph we extend two wings above our head, that is to say, if (after blessed Francis' example) in every good work our intention be pure and our action upright, and if we direct these toward God and strive with tireless zeal to please Him in everything. Now the wings must needs be joined together for the veiling of the head, because the Father of lights will by no means accept uprightness of action without purity of intention, nor yet the converse, as He Himself saith: "If thine eye is single thy whole body shall be bright, but if it is evil thy whole body shall be dark." For that is not a single eye which sees not what it should see for lack of knowledge of the truth, nor yet that which not having a pure intention looks on what it ought not.

Plain reason will judge that in the first case the eye is not single, but blind; and that in the second, the eye is evil. The feathers of these wings are the love of the Father who saves in mercy, and the fear of the Lord, the terrible Judge: which feathers should keep the souls of the elect raised up above earthly things by checking bad impulses and ordering the affections in chastity.

With two wings also we should fly to bestow double charity on our neighbour, namely by refreshing his soul with God's word and sustaining his body with earthly succour. But these wings are most rarely joined together because hardly any one is able to fulfil both

these duties. The feathers of these wings are the different acts necessary to be done for giving advice and help to our neighbour.

Lastly, with two wings the body, which is bare of merits, should be covered; and this is orderly performed when, so often as it has been stript by the intervention of sin, it is again clothed with innocence through contrition and confession. The feathers of these wings are the manifold affections begotten by execration of sin and hunger after righteousness.

115. All these things were most perfectly performed by the most blessed father Francis who bore the image and form of a seraph and by continuing on the Cross was found worthy to rise to the rank of the spirits on high. For he was ever on the Cross, shrinking from no toil and pain if only he might accomplish the Lord's will in himself and concerning himself. The brethren, moreover, who lived with him knew how continually every day his talk was of Jesus, how sweet and tender was his discourse, how benign and full of love his conversation. Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth spoke, and the spring of enlightened love which filled him inwardly through and through bubbled forth outwardly. Verily, he was much with Jesus; ever did he bear Jesus in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in his other members. Oh, how often, when sitting at table, if he heard or named or thought of Jesus, did he forget the bodily food, and as we read concerning the Saint: "Seeing, he saw not; and hearing, heard not". Nay, more, many a time, as he was walking on his way meditating and singing of Jesus, did he forget whither he was going, and invite all the elements to praise Jesus. And because with wondrous love he ever bore and preserved in his heart Christ Jesus and Him crucified, therefore he was signed in most glorious wise above all other men with the sign of Him whom in rapture of mind he even contemplated in glory unspeakable and incomprehensible, sitting at the right hand of the Father with whom He, the Most High, coequal Son of the Most High, in the unity of the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, overcometh and governeth, God eternally glorious throughout all ages. Amen.

Chapter 10

Of the wailing of the ladies at Saint Damian; and how Saint Francis was buried with praise and glory

116. His brethren therefore and sons who had come together with all the multitude of people from the neighbouring towns, rejoicing to be present at such a solemnity, spent the whole night on which the holy father died in praising God, so that for the sweetness of the songs of joy and the brightness of the lights it seemed to be a vigil of angels. And in the morning the people of Assisi with the whole of the clergy assembled, and took the sacred body from the place where he had died and brought it with honour into the city with hymns and praises and blare of trumpets. All carried boughs of olive and other trees, performing the sacred obsequies with solemnity; and with many lights and with loud-sounding voices they discharged the duty of praise. And when, as the sons bore their father and the flock followed their shepherd hastening to the Shepherd of all, they reached the place where he himself had planted the Religion and Order of Sacred Virgins and Poor Ladies, and laid him in the church of Saint Damian, wherein his said daughters dwelt whom he had won to the Lord, a little window was opened through which the Handmaids of Christ are wont at the appointed time to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Body. The coffin also was opened wherein lay hid a treasure of super-celestial virtues, wherein he was being borne by few who was wont to bear many. And lo! the Lady Clara, who was indeed illustrious (*clara*) through her holy merits and was the mother of the rest and the first plant of this holy Order, came with her daughters to look upon the father that spake not to them, and would not return to them, for he was hastening elsewhither. (117) And as they looked upon him with repeated sighs, with deep groaning and with many tears, they began to cry with choked voices: "Father, father, what shall we do? Why forsakest thou us in our misery, or to whom dost thou leave us in our desolation? Why didst thou not send us before rejoicing to the place whither thou art going - us whom thou leavest thus grieving here? What dost thou bid us to do, shut up thus in this prison - us whom thou art determined nevermore to visit as thou wast wont to do? With thee all our consolation departs and no such solace is left to us, buried in the world! Who shall comfort us in such poverty - poverty not less of merit than of [temporal] things? O father of the poor! lover of Poverty! who shall succour us in temptation, O thou

who hast known countless temptations, thou cautious trier of temptations? Who shall comfort us troubled ones in our tribulation, thou our helper in exceeding great tribulations which came upon us? O most bitter separation, O disastrous forsaking! O Death too dreadful who art slaughtering thousands of sons and daughters bereft of such a father while thou hastenest to remove past recall him through whom any zealous efforts of ours have chiefly prospered!"

But virginal bashfulness restrained their much weeping: and indeed it was very incongruous to wail for one over whose passing hence the angel army hovered in throngs, while the fellow-citizens of the Saints and they of God's household rejoiced. And so those Ladies, divided between sorrow and joy, kissed his radiant hands adorned with most precious gems and flashing with pearls: J and when he was taken away the door was shut which shall nevermore be opened to such woe.

O what was the grief of all over the woeful and piteous wailing of these Ladies! How great especially were the lamentations of the sorrowing sons! And their peculiar grief was shared by all, so that scarce any one could refrain from weeping while the angels of peace were bitterly weeping.

118. At length when all the multitude had reached the city they laid the most holy body with great rejoicing and exultation in a hallowed place - thenceforward still more hallowed - where to the glory of the Supreme Almighty God he illumines the world by a multiplication of new miracles, even as he has wonderfully enlightened it hitherto by the doctrine of his holy preaching. Thanks be to God. Amen.

See, most holy and blessed father, I have accompanied thee with praises due and worthy though insufficient, and have written a narrative, such as it is, of thy exploits. Grant therefore to me a miserable man so worthily to follow thee now that in mercy I may deserve to overtake thee hereafter. Remember, O tender father, the poor sons, to whom, after thee their one and only solace, scarce any comfort is left. For though thou, the first and best portion of them, be mingled with choirs of angels, and placed among the Apostles on a throne of glory, they nevertheless are lying in mire and dirt, shut

up in a dark prison, and crying mournfully to thee thus: "Present, father, before Jesus Christ, the Son of the Supreme Father, his sacred wounds, and show forth the tokens of the Cross in side, feet and hands, that He may deign in mercy to display His own wounds to the Father, Who for this will indeed ever be favourable to us in our misery. Amen."

Part III - Concerning the Canonization of Our Blessed Father Francis, and Concerning His Miracles

119. So our most glorious father Francis in the twentieth year of his conversion, connecting a happy beginning with a still happier end, most happily commended his spirit to heaven where, "crowned with glory and honour" and having obtained a place "amid fiery stones" (Ezekiel 28:14) he stands before the throne of the God-head and applies himself effectually to further the concerns of those whom he has left on earth. What indeed may be denied to him in the imprint of whose sacred stigmata appears the form of Him "who being co-equal with the Father sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the brightness of God's glory and the figure of His substance," making atonement for sins? Should not he be heard who having been "conformed unto the death of Christ Jesus in the fellowship of His sufferings," shows forth the sacred wounds in hands, feet and side? Verily he is already gladdening the whole world, saved by the new joy, and offering to all the advantage of true salvation. By the bright light of miracles he shines on the world and illumines the whole earth with the lustre of a true star. At first the world, robbed of his presence, mourned, and at his setting saw itself overwhelmed as it were in a pit of darkness. But now, in the rising of this new light, being lit up as at noon with brighter beams, it feels that the universal darkness has departed. All its lamentation, blessed God, has ceased now that everywhere and every day with new exultation plenteous sheaves of holy virtues are being heaped upon it through him. From east and west, from south and north come those who have been succoured through his advocacy and are proving by truthful witness that these things are so. And indeed while he lived in the flesh that chiefest lover of the things above took nothing in the way of property on earth, to the end that he might the more fully and joyfully possess the universal good: and so he who refused the part acquired the whole, and exchanged time for eternity. Everywhere he is helping all, everywhere he is at hand for all, and, truly a lover of the Unity, knows not the losses of participation. (120) Still living among sinners he is travelling and preaching

through the world: reigning now with the angels on high he flies swifter than thought as a messenger of the Supreme King and bestows glorious benefits on all peoples. Therefore the whole body of the peoples honours, reveres, glorifies and praises him. All in fact are sharers in the common good. Who may tell the number and nature of the miracles which the Lord is everywhere deigning to work through him? How many miracles in truth is Francis performing in France alone where the king and queen and all the magnates ran to kiss and worship the bolster which Saint Francis had used in his sickness? Where also the wise and most learned men in the world (of whom as is her wont Paris produces a greater abundance than any other place) are humbly and most devoutly revering, admiring and honouring Francis, the unlettered man and the true friend of simplicity and of all sincerity? And truly he was *Francis*, for above all men he bore a *frank* and noble heart. They who have experienced his greatness of spirit know how free, how liberal he was in all things, how confident and fearless; with what power, with what fervour of soul he trampled on all worldly things. And what shall I say of other parts of the world where by means of parts of his girdle diseases depart, sicknesses fly away, and crowds of both sexes are delivered from their plagues by merely calling on his name? (121) At his tomb, moreover, fresh miracles are constantly performing, and, in answer to multiplied intercessions, signal benefits to souls and bodies are granted at that place. Sight is restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the lame walk, the dumb speak, the gouty leap, the leper is cleansed, the swollen are reduced in bulk, and those oppressed by divers infirmities obtain their wished-for health, in such wise that the dead body heals living bodies, even as the living body raised up dead souls.

The Roman Pontiff, the highest of all pontiffs, the leader of Christians, the lord of the world, the shepherd of the Church, the Anointed of the Lord, the Vicar of Christ, heard and understood these things. He rejoiced and exulted, he was in transports of gladness when he beheld the renewal of the Church of God in his own times by new mysteries but by ancient wonders, and that in the person of his own son whom he bore in his sacred womb, cherished in his bosom, suckled with the word, and nurtured with the food of salvation. The other guardians of the Church heard it too, the shepherds of the flock, the defenders of the faith, the

friends of the Bridegroom, they who are at his side, the hinges (*cardines*) of the world, the venerable Cardinals. They congratulated the Church, they rejoiced with the Pope, they glorified the Saviour, Who with supreme and ineffable wisdom, supreme and incomprehensible grace, supreme and inestimable goodness, chose the foolish and base things of the world that so He might draw the mighty to Himself. The whole world heard and applauded, and the universal monarchy in obedience to the Catholic Faith abounded in joy and overflowed with holy consolation.

122. But there came a sudden change, and meantime a fresh emergency arose in the world. Forthwith the pleasantness of peace was disturbed; the torch of envy blazed up; the Church was torn by intestinal war in her own household. The Romans, a fierce and seditious race of men, raged, as they are wont, against their neighbours, and rashly put forth their hand against holy things. The noble Pope Gregory strove to keep down the rising wickedness, to repress the fierceness, to moderate the violence; and, like a tower of strength, protected the Church of Christ. Many perils burst upon her; destruction increased; and in the rest of the world sinners lifted up their necks against God. What then did the Pope do? Estimating the future by his ripe experience, and weighing the present, he left the City to the rebels, that he might deliver and defend the world from rebellion. So he went to the city of Rieti where he was received with the honour due to him: and proceeding thence to Spoleto he was honoured with great respect by all. Here he remained for a few days, and then, after taking order for the Church, paid a kind visit, accompanied by the venerable Cardinals, to the Handmaids of Christ, dead and buried to the world. The holy conversation and the deep poverty of these Ladies and their renowned way of life moved him and the others to tears, urged them to despise the world, and kindled them to embrace a life of retirement. O lovely Humility! nurse of all graces! The Prince of the world, the successor of the Prince of the Apostles, visits poor lowly women, comes to them in their seclusion, despised and humble as they are! An example of humility which though worthy of just approbation was unwonted, and had not been met with for many ages past.

123. And now he flies in haste to Assisi, where the glorious deposit

is preserved for him, to the end that thereby the universal suffering and approaching tribulation may be driven away. At his entry the whole region is jubilant, the city is filled with exultation, a great crowd of people celebrate their joy, and the bright day is made still brighter by new luminaries. Every one came forth to meet him, and a solemn vigil was kept by all. The pious fellowship of the Poor Brethren came out to meet him, and each one sang sweet hymns to Christ the Lord. The Vicar of Christ arrived at the "place" and as he alighted, greeted Saint Francis' sepulchre with eager reverence. He heaved many sighs, smote his breast, shed tears, and, in still more abundant devotion, bowed his reverend head. Meantime solemn conference was held touching the Saint's canonization, and the noble assembly of the Cardinals was often called together about this business. Many came together from all parts who had been delivered from their plagues through God's Saint, and from every side there was a great blaze of miracles. These were listened to, received, verified, and approved.

Meantime pressing affairs, a fresh emergency, compelled the blessed Pope to go to Perugia, whence (a superabundant and unparalleled favour) he purposed to return to Assisi for the supreme business. Finally there was another meeting at Perugia, and the sacred assembly of the venerable Cardinals was held in the Lord Pope's chamber about this matter. All were unanimous, and said the same thing. They read the miracles with the utmost reverence, and extolled the blessed father's life and conversation with the loudest encomiums.

124. "No need," said they, "for miracles to attest the most holy man's most holy life, which we have seen with our eyes, handled with our hands and proved under the teaching of truth". They were all transported with joy, they were glad, they wept, and truly in those tears was much blessing. Forthwith they appointed the blessed day whereon they should fill all the world with saving joy.

The solemn day, to be held in reverence by every age, arrived shedding sublime rapture not only on earth but even in the purlieus of heaven. Bishops were called together, abbots arrived, and prelates of the Church from the remotest parts were there; royalty was present, and a noble multitude of counts and magnates

assembled. They all escorted the lord of all the world and with him entered the city of Assisi with auspicious pomp. They reached the place prepared for the solemn event and the whole company of glorious Cardinals, bishops and abbots gathered round the blessed Pope. An extraordinary concourse of priests and clerks was there, there was the happy and sacred company of Religious, there the more bashful habit of the sacred veil, there a mighty throng of all peoples and a well-nigh countless multitude of either sex. They ran together from every quarter, and every age with the utmost eagerness was represented in that great assembly. Small and great were there, slave and he who was free from his lord.

125. The Supreme Pontiff is there, the Bridegroom of Christ's Church, surrounded by such various offspring, with a crown of glory on his head in manifest token of sanctity. He is there adorned with a pontifical chasuble, and clad with the holy garments bound with gold and ornamented with the work of the carver in precious stones. The Lord's Anointed is there resplendent in glorious magnificence; covered with engraven jewels shining with the radiance of spring he invites the gaze of all. The Cardinals and bishops surround him; decked with splendid necklaces and flashing with garments white as snow they exhibit the image of super-celestial beauties and represent the joy of the glorified. The whole people await the voice of joy, the voice of gladness, the new voice, the voice full of all sweetness, the voice of praise, the voice of perpetual blessing. First of all Pope Gregory preached to all the people and with honey-sweet affection proclaimed God's praises with sonorous voice. Then he uttered a noble panegyric of father Francis, and as he recalled and rehearsed the purity of his life he was altogether bathed in tears. The text of his sermon was this: "As the morning star amid vapour, as the moon in the days of her fulness, and as the sun in his brightness, so did he shine in the temple of God" (Ecclesiasticus 1:6,7). And when the discourse, faithful and worthy of all acceptance, was ended, one of the Lord Pope's sub-deacons, named Ottaviano, read out before all in a loud voice the miracles of the Saint: and Messer Riniero, (Riniero Capocci, a friend of Saint Dominic and a supporter of his Order) a cardinal deacon, a man of mighty and penetrating intellect, illustrious by his piety and character, discoursed of them with sacred utterance, bedewed with tears. The Shepherd of the Church

was in a transport of emotion; and as he heaved heavy sighs from the depths of his being, and redoubled salutary sobs, he poured forth streams of tears. The other prelates of the Church also shed floods of tears, the abundance of which bedewed their sacred attire. Finally all the people wept, and in their longing expectation were greatly wearied by the suspense.

126. Then the blessed Pope cried with a loud voice and said, raising his hands to heaven: "To the praise and glory of Almighty God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and of the glorious Virgin Mary, and of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and to the honour of the glorious Church of Rome, by the counsel of our brethren and the other prelates we decree, revering on earth the most blessed father Francis whom the Lord hath glorified in heaven, that he be numbered in the roll of saints, and that his festival be kept on the day of his death". And on this, the reverend Cardinals with the Lord Pope began to chant with loud voice "*Te Deum Laudamus*". Then was raised a shout of many people praising God, the earth rang with the mighty sound, the air was rilled with jubilations, and the ground was moistened with tears. New songs were sung, and God's servants rejoiced in melody of the spirit. Sweet-toned organs were heard, and spiritual songs were sung, by harmonious voices. Sweet perfume was there shed around, and jocund melody stirred the emotions of all. Brightly gleamed that day, which was tinted with more radiant beams. There the olive-boughs were green, and the other trees were decked in their fresh foliage: there all were adorned with festive attire of dazzling brightness and the blessing of peace rejoiced the minds of the throng. At length the happy Pope Gregory came down from his lofty throne, and by the steps beneath entered the sanctuary to offer vows and sacrifices, and with happy lips he kissed the tomb containing the body sacred and consecrated to God. He offered many prayers and celebrated the Sacred Mysteries. A crowd of brethren stood about him praising, worshipping and blessing Almighty God who has done great things in all lands. All the people magnified God's praises, and paid the due of holy thanksgiving to Saint Francis in honour of the Trinity Most High. Amen. These things were done in the city of Assisi on 16th July, in the second year of the pontificate of Pope Gregory IX. [A.D. 1228]

In Christ's name here begin the miracles of our most holy father Francis.

127. Humbly imploring the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we will, in order to arouse and promote the devotion of the men of this time, and to strengthen the faith of those that are to come, set down briefly but truly, under the guidance of Christ, the miracles which (as has been said) were read before the Lord Pope Gregory, and proclaimed to the people.

Of the healing of the crooked

On the day that the hallowed and holy body of the most blessed father Francis was put away, like a most precious treasure, having been anointed rather with super-celestial aromas than with earthly spices, a girl was brought whose neck had for a year past been monstrously bent so that her head was joined to the shoulder, and she could only look up sideways. But after placing her head for some time under the coffin wherein the precious body of the Saint lay, forthwith she raised up her neck, through the most holy man's merits, and her head was restored to its proper position so that the girl was astounded at the sudden change in herself and began to run away, weeping excessively. Now in the shoulder to which her head had been fastened a pit was seen caused by the position which the long illness had brought about.

128. There was in the territory of Narni a boy whose leg was so bent back that he could only walk by the help of two sticks. He was a beggar, and after having been oppressed with this grievous infirmity for several years he did not know his own father and mother. But by the merits of our most blessed father Francis he was delivered from the said trial in such wise that he could go freely anywhere without the support of sticks, praising and blessing God and His Saint.

129. One Nicholas, a citizen of Foligno had his left leg drawn together, and, as he suffered excessive pain, he spent so much on doctors in order to recover his former health that he incurred debts against his will which were beyond his power to repay. At last, when their help had done him no good, and he was suffering such agony that his frequent screams prevented his neighbours from

sleeping at night, he made vows to God and Saint Francis and had himself carried to Saint Francis' tomb; and, after passing a night before it in prayer, he stretched his leg out and joyfully returned without any stick to his own home.

130. Another boy with one leg so bent that the knee adhered to his breast and the heel to his buttocks came to the sepulchre of blessed Francis. His father was mortifying his own flesh with sackcloth and his mother sorely afflicting herself for his sake. Suddenly the boy recovered his health so perfectly that he was able to run about the streets sound and merry, giving thanks to God and Saint Francis.

131. In the city of Fano there was a man so bent that his legs, which were full of ulcers, adhered to his buttocks and gave off such a stench that the attendants altogether refused to admit him to the hospital or to keep him there. But before long he rejoiced in being delivered by the merits of the most blessed father Francis, whose compassion he had implored.

132. There was a little girl of Gubbio whose hands were contracted and she had wholly lost the use of all her limbs for a year past. In order to obtain for her the favour of health, her nurse carried her with a waxen image to the tomb of the most blessed father Francis. And after staying there for the space of eight days, one day all her limbs were completely restored to their uses, so as to be fit as usual for their original functions.

133. Another boy from Montenero lay before the doors of the church where the body of Saint Francis rests, for several days, being unable to walk or to sit up, for from the waist down he was deprived of all strength and of the use of his limbs. But one day, having been brought into the church, after touching the sepulchre of the most blessed father Francis he came out sound and whole. And the little boy himself used to say that while he was lying before the tomb of the glorious saint, a young man stood before him over the tomb, clad in the habit of the brethren and carrying pears in his hands, who called him, offered him a pear, and encouraged him to rise. The boy took the pear from his hands and answered, "See, I am bound together and cannot get up at all". Then he ate the pear that had been given him and stretched out his hand for another, which the same youth was offering him. Again he urged the boy to get up,

but he did not do so, feeling himself held down by his infirmity. But as he was stretching his hand out for the pear, the young man after giving him the pear took his hand, led him out, and disappeared from his sight. The boy, seeing that he was made whole, began to cry aloud, showing to all what had been done in him.

134. A woman from the fortress of Coccorano was brought in a basket to the glorious father's tomb, for she had lost the use of all her members except her tongue. After staying a while before the most holy man's tomb she arose perfectly cured.

Another citizen of Gubbio after bringing his son, who was bowed together, in a basket to the holy father's tomb, received him back sound and whole, though he had been bowed in so extraordinary a way that his legs adhered to the buttocks and were quite withered.

135. Bartholomew of the city of Narni, a very poor and needy man, once fell asleep under a walnut-tree, and when he awoke he found himself so bent that he could not walk. As the infirmity gradually increased, one leg and foot became emaciated, crooked and withered; and insensible to cutting and burning. But the most holy Francis, the true lover of the poor and father of all the needy, showed himself to this man one night in a vision, bidding him go to a certain bath where he, moved by compassion for such misery, would release him from this sickness. When the man awoke, not knowing what to do, he told the vision in order to the bishop, and the bishop signed him with the Cross and blessed him, bidding him hasten to the bath that had been ordered. So the man, leaning on a stick, began to drag himself to the place as well as he could: and as he was sorrowfully going along, worn out by the great labour, he heard a voice saying to him, "Go in the peace of the Lord, for I am he to whom thou hast made thy vow". Then as he was approaching the bath, he missed the way (for it was night) and again heard a voice telling him that he was not walking by the right way, and directing him to the bath. And when he had reached the place and had entered the bath he felt one hand laid upon his foot, and another on his leg, gently stretching it out: and so, being cured straightway, he jumped out of the bath praising and blessing the omnipotence of the Creator, and blessed Francis His servant, who had bestowed on him such favour and power.

The man had been crooked, and a beggar, for six years, and was of advanced age.

Of the blind receiving sight

136. A woman named Sibyl who had suffered from blindness of the eyes for several years was brought sorrowing to the sepulchre of the man of God: but on recovering her former sight she returned home rejoicing and exultant.

A blind man of Spello recovered his long-lost sight before the tomb of the holy body.

Another woman of Camerino had been entirely deprived of the light of her right eye. Her parents laid on the eye a cloth that blessed Francis had touched, and so, having made a vow, they yielded thanks to the Lord God and Saint Francis for the recovered light.

Something similar happened to a woman of Gubbio, who, after making a vow, rejoiced in the recovery of her former sight.

A citizen of Assisi who had lost the light of his eyes for five years, having been intimate with blessed Francis while he lived, always in praying to the blessed man used to recall this intimacy, and, on touching his sepulchre was healed.

One Albertino of Narni had wholly lost the sight of his eyes for about a year and his eyelids hung down to his cheeks. He made a vow to blessed Francis, and forthwith having recovered his sight, made ready, and went to visit his glorious sepulchre.

Of the healing of demoniacs

137. There was a man in the city of Foligno named Peter who when on his way to visit the threshold of blessed Michael the Archangel, (Monte Santangelo in Apulia) either in fulfilment of a vow, or as a penance enjoined on him for sins, came to a certain spring. Being wearied with the journey and thirsty he tasted some of the water of the spring, and it seemed to him that he had imbibed devils: and so, being molested by them, during three years he did things horrid to see and detestable to tell. Then he came to the most holy father's

tomb, and here, while the devils were raging, and cruelly mauling him, he was wondrously delivered on touching the sepulchre, by a clear and manifest miracle.

138. In the city of Narni was a woman who was a prey to terrible frenzy, and being out of her mind, did horrible things and spoke unseemly words. At length blessed Francis appeared to her in a vision, saying, "Sign thyself with the cross," and on her answering, "I cannot," the Saint himself impressed the sign of the cross upon her and drove out from her her madness and demoniacal fancies.

Many men and women also, tormented in various ways by devils, and deluded by their jugglery were snatched out of their power by the noble merits of the holy and glorious father. But because people of that kind are often the victims of delusion, let us dismiss this matter briefly and pass on to more important things.

Of sick persons saved from death; of cases of swelling, dropsy, arthritis, paralysis and other diseases

139. A boy named Matthew, of the city of Todi, had lain in bed for eight days as if dead: his mouth was fast closed, his eyes were sightless, and the skin of his face, hands and feet had turned as black as a pot. All despaired of his life, but at his mother's vow he got well with marvellous rapidity. Now there was a discharge of foul blood from his mouth, through which he was also believed to be discharging his intestines. But as soon as his mother on her knees had humbly called on the name of Saint Francis, as she arose from prayer, the boy began to open his eyes, to see the light and to suck the breast; and soon after the black slough fell off, the flesh returned as before, he got better, and recovered his strength. And as soon as he began to get better his mother asked him, "Who has delivered thee, my son?" And he answered lisping, "Ciccu, Ciccu". Again he was asked, "Whose servant art thou?" and again he answered, "Ciccu, Ciccu"; for being an infant he could not speak plain, and so he clipped the name of blessed Francis in that way.

140. There was a lad who fell down from a certain very high place where he was staying and lost his speech and the use of all his limbs. After being three days without eating or drinking, or perceiving anything, he was thought to be dead. But his mother,

seeking for the aid of no physicians, entreated blessed Francis to heal him. And so, having made her vow, she received him alive and whole, and began to praise the Saviour's omnipotence.

Another lad named Mancino, sick unto death, and given over by all, called, as well as he could, on the name of blessed Francis and instantly recovered.

A boy of Arezzo named Walter, suffering from continual fever and tormented by two abscesses, who had been given over by the doctors, was restored to his wished-for health by his parents' making a vow to blessed Francis.

Another, nigh to death, was forthwith freed from all his suffering by making a waxen image, and that before the image was finished.

141. A woman who had lain on her sick-bed for several years and could neither turn nor move, made a vow to God and blessed Francis, whereupon she was freed from all her sickness and performed the necessary duties of her life.

There was a woman in the city of Narni who for eight years had had a hand so withered that she could do nothing with it. At last the most blessed father Francis appeared to her in a vision, and by stretching out her hand made it as serviceable as the other.

In the same city was a lad who for ten years had been laid up with a grievous sickness, and had become so swollen that no medicine could do him good. But by the merits of blessed Francis, to whom his mother had made a vow, he immediately received the blessing of health.

In the city of Fano was a man laid up with dropsy whose limbs were horribly swollen, but through blessed Francis, he was found worthy to be wholly freed from that sickness.

A citizen of Todi suffered so terribly from gouty arthritis that he could neither sit down nor rest. The violence of the disease gave him such constant chills that he seemed reduced to nothing. He called in doctors, he multiplied baths, he used many medicines, but none of these things could give him relief. But one day, in the

presence of a priest, he made a vow in order that Saint Francis might give him back his former health: and so, after offering prayers to the Saint, he presently found his former health restored.

142. A woman lying paralysed in the city of Gubbio was released from her infirmity and cured after thrice calling on the name of blessed Francis.

There was a man called Bontadoso who suffered so grievously in his hands and feet that he could neither move nor turn in any direction: and when he was now unable to eat or sleep a woman came to him one day advising and suggesting that if he would be speedily delivered from this infirmity he should most earnestly make a vow to blessed Francis. But the man, in a paroxysm of pain, answered, "I don't believe he is a Saint". The woman, however, persisted in her suggestion of the vow, and at last he made it in the following words: "I vow myself to Saint Francis, and believe him to be a Saint, if he cures me of this illness within three days". And, by the merits of God's Saint, he was presently delivered, and walked, ate, and slept, giving glory to Almighty God.

143. There was a man who had been dangerously wounded in the head by an iron arrow which had penetrated the eye-socket and stuck in his head; and the doctors could give him no help. Then with humble devotion he made a vow to Francis the Saint of God, in the hope of being delivered by his recommendation. While he was getting a little rest in sleep, Saint Francis told him in a dream to have the arrow taken out by the back of his head. This was accordingly done next day, and he was relieved without great difficulty.

144. There was a man at the fortress of Spello named Imperatore who had suffered so severely from rupture for two years that all his intestines were descending outwardly through his lower parts; nor had he been able to place them back inside for a long time so that he had to have a truss wherewith to retain them inside. He went to doctors, begging them to relieve him, but as they demanded a price which he could not give inasmuch as he had not. wherewithal to keep himself for a single day, he quite despaired of their help. At length he betook him to God for help, and began humbly to invoke the merits of blessed Francis, out of doors, at home, and wherever

he might be. And so it came to pass that in a short space of time he was entirely cured by God's grace and blessed Francis' merits.

145. A brother in the March of Ancona, warring under the obedience of our Religion, was suffering severely from fistula in the groin, or in the side, and had already been judged by the doctors to be in a hopeless state because of the extent of the disease. Then he begged the Minister under whose obedience he was living to allow him to go and visit the place where the most blessed father's body lay, trusting that by the Saint's merits he would obtain the favour of a cure. But his Minister forbade him to go, fearing that the fatigue of the journey might make him worse, on account of the snow and rain which then prevailed. But one night, while the brother was feeling a little vexed at the refusal of permission to go, the holy father Francis stood by him saying: "Son, be no more anxious about this, but take off the fur coat thou hast on, throw away the plaster and the bandage that is over it, and observe thy Rule, and thou shalt be delivered". So he arose in the morning, did all that he had been bidden to do, and gave thanks to God for his speedy deliverance.

Of the cleansing of lepers

146. At Saint Severino in the March of Ancona there was a lad named Atto who was covered all over with scabs, and, in accordance with the physicians' judgment, was held by all as a leper: all his limbs were swollen and enlarged, and the distention and inflation of his veins caused him to see everything awry. He could not walk, but lay continually on his sick-bed, filling his parents with grief and sadness: and the father, daily wounded as he was by his son's misery, could not tell what to do with him. At last it came into his heart by all means to commend his son to blessed Francis, and he said to him: "Wilt thou, my son, make a vow to Saint Francis (who is renowned for many miracles everywhere), that it may please him to deliver thee from this sickness?" And he answered: "I will, father"; whereupon his father had paper brought and, after measuring his son's height and girth, said: "Raise thyself up, my son, and make thy vow to blessed Francis, and when he has given thee deliverance thou shalt bring him a candle of thy height every year while thou livest". He rose up as well as he could? at his

father's bidding, and clasping his hands began humbly to invoke Saint Francis' compassion; and accordingly after he had taken up the paper measure, and finished his prayer, he was straightway healed of his leprosy, and arose, giving glory to God and blessed Francis, and joyfully began to walk.

In the city of Fano a lad named Bonuomo, who was held by all the doctors to be paralysed and leprous, was devoutly offered to blessed Francis by his parents; whereupon he was cleansed from his leprosy, the paralysis left him, and he gained full health.

Of the dumb speaking and the deaf hearing

147. At Castel della Pieve was a poor beggar-boy who had been entirely deaf and dumb from birth. Now his tongue was so extremely short that it seemed to several who had examined him many times as if it had been cut off. One evening he came to the house of a man of the same place who was called Mark and asked for shelter by signs, as the dumb are wont to do: for he leaned his head sideways on his hand so as to make the man understand that he wanted to lodge with him that night. The man gladly received him into his house and willingly kept him with him, for the boy was a competent servant. He was a sharp boy, for though deaf and dumb from the cradle he understood by signs all he was told to do. When the man and his wife were at supper one night and the boy was waiting on them, the man said to her: "I should consider it the greatest of miracles, if blessed Francis gave hearing and speech to this boy". (148) And he added: "I vow to the Lord God that if blessed Francis shall deign to work this, I will for his sake hold this boy most dear and provide for him all his life long". When the vow was finished, wondrous to relate, the boy spoke straightway and said, "Saint Francis lives"; and then looking behind him, he said, "I see Saint Francis standing up there and he is coming to give me speech". And he added: "What therefore shall I say to the people?" Mark replied: "Thou shalt praise the Lord and shalt save many men". Then Mark arose in great joy and exultation and published before all men what had been done. All who had seen the boy speechless before ran together, and, filled with admiration and amazement, gave humble praise to God and blessed Francis. The boy's tongue grew and became fit for speech, and he began to utter

properly formed words as if he had always spoken.

149. Another boy named Villa could neither speak nor walk. His mother therefore made in faith a waxen image for a votive offering and brought it very reverently to the blessed father Francis' resting-place: and on her return home she found her son walking and talking.

There was a man in the diocese of Perugia quite deprived of speech who always kept his mouth open, gaping horribly and in great distress, for his throat was very much swollen. When he reached the place where the most holy body rests and was about to go up the steps to the tomb, he vomited much blood, and, thoroughly relieved, began to speak and to open and shut his mouth as required.

150. There was a woman who suffered such pain in her throat that from the excessive burning her tongue was sticking to her palate and dried up. She could neither speak, nor eat, nor drink; plasters were applied and medicines used, but none of these things gave any relief from her infirmity. At last in her heart (for she could not speak) she made a vow to Saint Francis, and suddenly the flesh cracked and there came out of her gullet a little round stone which she took in her hand and showed to all the bystanders, whereupon she was relieved immediately.

There was a lad at the fortress of Greccio who had lost his hearing, his memory, and his speech, nor could he understand or perceive anything. But his parents, having great trust in Saint Francis, made a vow to him with humble devotion on behalf of the lad; and when the vow had been fulfilled he was richly endowed by the favour of the most holy and glorious father Francis with all the senses he had lacked.

To the praise, glory, and honour of Jesus Christ our Lord whose kingdom and empire endureth firm and immovable throughout all ages. Amen.

Conclusion

151. We have said a little, and omitted more concerning the

miracles of our most blessed father Francis, relinquishing to those that would tread in his footsteps the care of seeking out the grace of new blessing, to the end that he who by word and example, by his life and teaching has most gloriously renewed the whole world may ever deign to water with new showers of super-celestial unctions the minds of those who love the name of the Lord. I entreat, for the love of the Poor Man Crucified and by His sacred wounds, which the blessed father Francis bore in his body, all who read, see, or hear these things, to remember before God, me a sinner. Amen.

Blessing and honour and all praise be to God only wise Who ever most wisely worketh all in all to His glory. Amen. Amen. Amen.

About This Ebook

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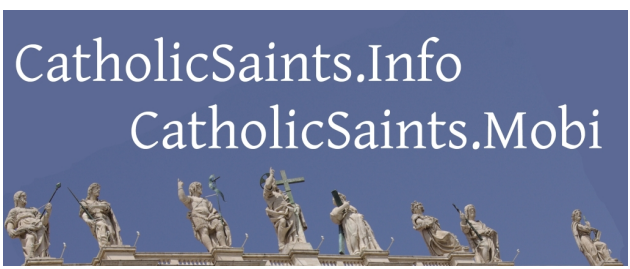
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